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A Linguistic Study of the Third Person Generic Pronoun: Singular They

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This thesis submitted by Philip Roger Anderson in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of English
University is hereby recommended by the final evaluation committee.

A LINGUISTIC STUDY OF THE THIRD PERSON
GENERIC PRONOUN: SINGULAR THEY

by

Philip Roger Anderson

B. S., Moorhead State University, 1991

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of

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for the Degree

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This thesis submitted by Philip Roger Anderson in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at St. Cloud State University is hereby approved by the final evaluation committee.

Philip Roger Anderson

Societal change is apparent to us in every regard: from government to language. In the area of language, use of pronouns has changed over the centuries and continues to do so today. After decades of passive adherence to a prescriptive rule condemning the use of the pronoun *they* as a singular form, evidence suggests that this form is accepted by society, consciously or unconsciously, as an alternative for the generic pronoun *he*.

Prescriptivism has served to shape the English language through the intents, likes, and dislikes of grammarians who have sometimes formed grammar rules to their own liking rather than looking at the actual language for reference. The pronoun *they* came from Old Norse and has been used with singular antecedents since early times. The usage of the pronoun was condemned by grammarians in the 17th century. However, it has demonstrated how views have changed from the 17th century to the present day towards the usage of the pronoun *they* with singular antecedents. Studies of composition in the 19th century about "the educated person" and studies of language on television programs demonstrate the growing usage of the pronoun *they* with singular antecedents. Today, even some government regulations address gender equity by mandating the elimination of the use of titles like "fireman" and "craftsman" along with the generic pronoun *he*.

In this study, a survey was distributed to high school and university teachers, who are society's purveyors of norms, asking for participants to accept sentences, which contain the pronoun *they* with a singular antecedent, or to suggest improvements. The results of this survey confirm a general acceptance of using the pronoun *they* with singular antecedents. While overall singular *they* was accepted 40.97% of the time, high school teachers, traditional purveyors of society's norms, accepted the usage 60% of

Dennis Nunes

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the time and the age group 33-43, the largest age group in the survey, accepted this usage 54.13% of the time. In spite of a prescriptive rule condemning its usage, *singular they* continues to survive.

A LINGUISTIC STUDY OF THE THIRD PERSON GENERIC PRONOUN: *SINGULAR THEY*

July
Month

1995

Philip Roger Anderson by Research Committee:

Quellen: Anderson

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July 1995
Month Year

Approved by Research Committee:

Suellen Rundquist
Suellen Rundquist Chairperson

For and because of my grandparents, parents, sisters, family, and friends
who have inspired and encouraged me through thought, word, and deed.

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its virility. These examples demonstrate not only that it is used, but that it is in an uncompromising position which is, at best, awkwardly supplanted by other pronouns.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis reports research on linguistic change with respect to the pronoun *they* and its use in the singular form (For example, Before dropping a class a student must consult their advisor.). The motivations and interests for researching this topic are many. One of the motivations is that it is becoming more apparent that the use of the pronoun *they* with a singular antecedent for the purpose of gender neutrality is acceptable. The second motivation is that inconsistencies have been noticed in what is being taught and what is used or applied by society. Education does not always reflect the true realities of life and thus is sometimes out of touch with reality. In this instance some individuals are falsely defending the purity of the language by stating prescriptive rules that say it is incorrect to use *they* in reference to a singular antecedent, when in fact *they* has historically been used in reference to singular antecedents from early times and possibly since this foreign pronoun's adoption into English from Old Norse. Its prevalence in today's writing in the society at large and not just small groups of individuals is best reflected in the accompanying Appendices (A, B, C, & D) which demonstrate

its virility. These examples demonstrate not only that it is used, but that it is in an uncompromising position which is, at best, awkwardly supplanted by other pronouns.

One could just brush off the appearances of *singular they* simply as editing errors; however, it seems possible that one could find the use of *singular they* at least once, if not more often, in almost all text books and a number of professional periodical publications. It could also be said that the finding of a single error in every publication is of little significance. That would be true if it were not for the fact that this is the same lexical item being missed every time. To give just a small taste of such occurrences, here are some examples from professional sources:

Office of Graduate Studies. Graduate Student Handbook 1993-1994. St. Cloud: St. Cloud State University, 1993.

Petitions must be signed by **the student** and **their** academic advisor before the graduate office will act upon them. (13)

St. Cloud State University. Summer Session. St. Cloud: St. Cloud State University, 1994.

No **one** will be allowed to process an add before **their** earliest scheduled registration time. (3)

Spradley, James P. Participant Observation. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1980.

If I have to wait for **someone** else to finish using the machine, I don't watch what **they** are doing *in order to* understand more fully **their** actions. I know what **they** are doing; I may look at the way **they** have dressed, or try to remember **their** name if I have heard it before. (54)

You will not try to pay attention to how quickly **each person** moves, how **they** stand, how **they** handle their belongings,... (55)

Tuckman, Bruce W. Conducting Educational Research. 4th ed. Orlando: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1994.

Request for cooperation. The letter constitutes an appeal from you for **the respondent's** help. If there are special reasons why **they** should help (for example, the importance of the study for **their** profession) be sure to mention them. (242-3)

Minnesota Department of Human Services. A New Financial Worker's Guide to the CAF II. 15 January, 1993.

Depending on the program of coverage, a **spouse** of an applicant will either be included in the assistance unit or have **their** income deemed available to the assistance unit. (13)

If **the client** maintains a home in another state, note purpose of **their** presence in Minnesota. (21)

If **the client** answers "yes" **they** must list the reason. (24)

These are just a few of the examples related to *singular they* that one can find.

As mentioned above, many more examples have been included in the Appendices.

Moreover, *singular they* is a topic of focus in a growing number of grammar books and writers' references. Statements accompanying *singular they* range from its denunciation to timid or more assertive approvals. Just the simple mention of it in these publications is evidence of its vitality and existence. Here are two examples of what these publications are saying about *singular they*:

Harbrace College Handbook (Hodges) addresses the subject in this manner:

Increasingly, however, writers are using plural pronouns to refer to singular antecedents that denote both sexes or either sex.

In fact, the fear of growing old is so great that every aged person is an insult and a threat to the society. They remind us of our own death.-Sharon Curtin

As you make choices about pronouns referring to singular antecedents such as **everyone** and a **person**, consider not only your own preferences but those of your audience. (68)

The St. Martin's Handbook (Lunsford) addresses the subject in a different manner in a few of its editions. In 1989, in a discussion about the example:

"Everyone had **their** own theory about Marcia's resignation":

You will probably hear -- and perhaps use -- such sentences in conversation, but you should be careful about using them in writing. Although this usage is now gaining some acceptance, it is probably a good idea to talk to your instructor to see what he or she advises before using it in academic work. (223)

There also have been studies of student compositions and the pronoun selection in compositions (Meyers) and of pronominal usage in television programs like talk-shows and news-shows (Newman). Finally, there have even been laws passed prohibiting the use of the pronouns he, she, or any combination of the two (Pinney; Brokaw).

All of these items, along with others, are presented here with a study performed to tabulate the acceptance of *singular they* by educators and academics in high school and university.

A TASTE OF HISTORY RELATED TO ENGLISH AND THE PRONOUN THEY

Chapter II of the Anglo and Saxon raiders

and conquerors of the Celtic people in what is now called England. From the beginning these people

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter focuses on the use of the pronoun *they*, along with its related forms, and its use as a singular. It is not proported that *singular they* is filling a new linguistic need or void that has emerged in the English language system. Rather, it is the author's desire to show that it has been a vibrant entity in the English language for many centuries that has fallen victim to prescriptivism.

All living languages have gone through many changes which reflect the changes in the societies they are associated with and with which they interact. Currently in the United States there is a strong force fueling changes in society and the language that society uses: a desire to not misrepresent or at least to equally represent both genders in the language. This force is a part of what is called Political Correctness or PC. This force, PC, is not responsible for making the initial change in English in regards to the topic of this paper, *singular they*; it is, however, causing a return to its use.

of Old English there were principally three languages that had any influence on English, namely Celtic, Latin, and Old Norse.

A TASTE OF HISTORY RELATED TO ENGLISH AND THE PRONOUN *THEY*

English developed from the language of the Anglo and Saxon raiders and conquerors of the Celtic people in what is now called England. From the beginning these people

never called their language anything but *Englisc* (English). The word is derived from the name of the Angles (Old English *Engle*) but is used without distinction for the language of all the invading tribes. In like manner the land and its people are early called *Angelcynn* (Angle-kin or race of the Angles), and this is the common name until after the Danish period. From about the year 1000 *Englaland* (land of the Angles) begins to take its place. (Baugh and Cable 49)

The language English, or English, is considered to have gone through three stages of development: Old English from approximately 450 to 1150, Middle English from approximately 1150 to 1500, and Modern English beginning in about 1500. Each period of the language has its own characteristics.

Old English

Old English was a fully inflected language with four cases (Nominative, Genitive, Dative, and Accusative). The inflectional endings were used with nouns, adjectives, and verbs. In the times of Old English there were principally three languages that had any influence on English, namely Celtic, Latin, and Old Norse.

The Scandinavians began to arrive towards the end of the eighth century and continued until late into the eleventh century when the King of Denmark, Cnut, acquired the English throne in 1017 (37). For the next twenty five years,

"The first identified language in England is that of the Celts, which was the first Indo-European tongue known to have been used in the British Isles" (Bryant 32). The Celts were also the inhabitants of the isle when Julius Caesar invaded in 55 B.C. This Celtic language, however, had little impact on English, partially because it was a language of conquered people. The only Celtic items that were incorporated into English outside of place names (Kent, Aberdeen Thames, and Avon for example) were less than a score of words (broc, "badger," binn "basket," "crib," to name but a few) (36).

The second language to have influence on Old English was Latin. Latin had a stronger influence on Old English than Celtic, but not much more. This is due to the fact that when things were introduced into Old English the tendency was to translate the idea, much like modern German, rather than adopting the word. The number of loan words from before 1050 from Latin has been estimated at about 400. However, many of these words only occur once in contemporary sources making the number of words in use much less (Krapp 216). Some of the words that were adopted into the language were "cheese, mile, kitchen, cup, wall, kettle, and wine" (Bryant 36). Other words were related to place names. Many of the place names incorporated various derivatives of the Latin word *castra*, "camp," such as Lancaster, Gloucester, Worcester, Chester, Winchester (36).

The third language to have influence on Old English was the language of the Vikings, sometimes referred to as Scandinavian, Old Norse, or Danish. The Scandinavians began to arrive towards the end of the eighth century and continued until late into the eleventh century when the King of Denmark, Cnut, acquired the English throne in 1017 (37). For the next twenty five years,

with the Danish kings reigning, many Scandinavians made England their home which resulted in more than 1400 place-names in England. This is noted by the addition of a Danish word. Such words are *by*, meaning "town" (Derby, Rugby, Grimsby), or *thorp*, meaning "village" (Althorp, Linthorpe), or *thwaite*, meaning "an isolated piece of ground" (Applethwaite) (37).

The Scandinavians and the Anglo-Saxons had a close relationship and as a result they often intermarried. These relationships had a great influence on Old English; however, due to the similarity of the two languages it is not all that easy to determine the full extent of the influence of Old Norse on Old English. For instance, both languages had common words such as *man*, *wife*, *father*, *mother*, and *house*. There are some words that are certainly from Scandinavian. Words such as *sky*, *skull*, *scrub*, *scare*, and *bask* with the sk sound as well as words with g and k in them like *give*, *get*, *egg*, and *kid* all have Scandinavian origins. These words were used in everyday life and indicate that the Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians lived side by side, as equals, rather than as ruling class and conquered as with the Celts (38). Additionally, Old English had grammatical gender (where everything has a gender which is not related to sex, much as exists in many European languages today, such as Spanish, French, and German) and had full inflections as will be demonstrated below.

Middle English

During the period of Middle English the use of these inflections was greatly reduced, and consequently this is known as the period of leveled inflections. The s that we now commonly find on nouns as the plural

marker in English began as a regional feature in the north and north Midland areas of England. In these areas it became the standard plural ending by 1200. By 1250, it had become standard in the rest of the Midland areas with its conquering the rest of England during the fourteenth century. However, in early Middle English there were two methods indicating the plural. The strong declension (-s or -es) and the weak declension (-en as in ox and oxen). The -en enjoyed widespread use in the south until the thirteenth century when it was overtaken in most forms by the -s (Baugh and Cable 156).

The language that had the greatest influence on Middle English was the language of the Norman conquerors, French. The ruling Normans were also French royalty and thus continued their contact with the continent and did not learn English. When the Normans were forced to pledge allegiance to either France or England, many chose to stay in England and felt alienated from France. The alienation was one of the factors that soon led the Normans to learn the English language and become truly English. This caused the incorporation of many French terms and contributed to the great number of synonyms for which English is famous. A short list of the many introduced French words is: *dinner, taste, supper, boil, embroidery, mitten, satin, diamond, government, justice, attorney, parliament, prayer, clergy, religion, combat, soldier, sergeant, lieutenant, painting, sculpture, beauty, romance, geometry, grammar*. Two pairs of synonyms are *work* (English) and *labor* (French) and *town* (English) and *city* (French) (Bryant 72).

French, however, was not the only language to influence Middle English. Latin, too, had an increased presence. Most of the influence was due to print, in particular to Wycliffe's translation of the Bible (72). Many other

words were related to science, literature, theology, law, and medicine during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries -- for example, *allegory*, *legal*, *mechanical*, *nervous*, *pulpit*, *rosary*, *scripture*, *secular*, *testify*, *testimony*, and *ulcer*. Suffixes were also added: *-able*, *-al*, *-ent*, *-ible*, *-ive*, and *-ous*. Again synonyms were added: *ask* (English), *inquire* (French), and *interrogate* (Latin); *holy* (English), *sacred* (French), and *consecrated* (Latin) (72).

Lastly the low languages (Flemish, Dutch, and Low German) influenced Middle English. These contributions came because of economic ties and because the king, William the Conqueror, had taken a Flemish wife. The primary economic tie had to do with the wool industry. The English exported it to the other areas, but also encouraged the expert weavers to come to England, as many did. Some of these borrowed words are *deck*, *dock*, *freighter*, *lighter*, *furlough*, *dollar*, *easel*, *etching*, and *landscape* (73).

Modern English

Modern English is referred to as the period of lost inflections because the inflectional system has almost entirely disappeared. Today, if a person were to look at a page of Old English it would likely present greater strangeness than that of a page of French or Italian. This strangeness is due, in part, to the employment of certain characters that no longer form a part of our alphabet. Also, English has gone through changes in spelling, pronunciation, lexicon, and grammar (Baugh and Cable 50-51).

Inflections

The inflectional endings were greatly changed in English. The following examples are included to illustrate the great changes that have occurred in the inflectional system. The inflectional endings on adjectives were the most affected as shown on the adjective "active."

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Singular			
Nom.	hwæt	hwat <u>u</u> (hwæt)	hwæt
Acc.	hwæt <u>e</u>	hwat <u>e</u>	hwæt
Gen.	hwæt <u>es</u>	hwæt <u>re</u>	hwæt <u>es</u>
Dat.	hwat <u>es</u>	hwæt <u>re</u>	hwat <u>u</u> <u>m</u>
Inst.	hwat <u>e</u>		hwat <u>e</u>
Plural			
Nom.	hwat <u>e</u>	hwat <u>e</u>	hwat <u>u</u>
Acc.	hwat <u>e</u>	hwat <u>e</u>	hwæt
Gen.	hwæt <u>ra</u>	hwæt <u>ra</u>	hwæt <u>ra</u>
Dat.	hwat <u>u</u> <u>m</u>	hwat <u>u</u> <u>m</u>	hwat <u>u</u> <u>m</u>

(Campbell 264)

Nouns were also highly inflected. Examples of a masculine noun (son) and a feminine noun (love) as they were in Old and Middle English are shown below.

	Old English	Middle English
	"son"	"son"
		Early ME Late ME
Singular		
Nom.	sun <u>u</u>	sun <u>e</u> son <u>e</u>
Gen.	sun <u>a</u>	sun <u>e</u> son <u>es</u>
Dat.	sun <u>a</u>	sun <u>e</u> son <u>e</u>
Acc.	sun <u>u</u>	sun <u>e</u> son <u>e</u>

Plural

Nom.	<u>sun</u> a	<u>sun</u> e	<u>son</u> es
Gen.	<u>sun</u> a	<u>sun</u> e	<u>son</u> es
Dat.	<u>sun</u> u <u>m</u>	<u>sun</u> e(n)	<u>son</u> es
Acc.	<u>sun</u> a	<u>sun</u> e	<u>son</u> es

Old English

"love"

Middle English

"love"

Early ME

Late ME

Singular

Nom.	<u>lu</u> fu	<u>lu</u> ve	<u>lo</u> ve
Gen.	<u>lu</u> fe	<u>lu</u> ve	<u>lo</u> ves
Dat.	<u>lu</u> fe	<u>lu</u> ve	<u>lo</u> ve
Acc.	<u>lu</u> fe	<u>lu</u> ve	<u>lo</u> ve

Plural

Nom.	<u>lu</u> fa	<u>lu</u> ve	<u>lo</u> ves
Gen.	<u>lu</u> fa	<u>lu</u> ve	<u>lo</u> ves
Dat.	<u>lu</u> fu <u>m</u>	<u>lu</u> ve(n)	<u>lo</u> ves
Acc.	<u>lu</u> fa	<u>lu</u> ve	<u>lo</u> ves

(Moore 85)

These changes have in effect made a new language. In this new language word order is very important and its lexicon is constructed of 78.1% Anglo-Saxon, 15.2% French, 3.1% Latin, 2.4% Norse and 2.9% of words from other languages (Robertson and Cassidy 155). Among the 23.6% of foreign words in English, three are of particular interest here. These words are the pronouns *they*, *their* and *them*, of Scandinavian origins, which replaced the Old English pronouns *hie*, *hiera*, and *him* (Baugh and Cable 100). Based on all the changes illustrated here, one could say that English is an impure language, as are all living languages.

THE HISTORY OF PRESCRIPTIVISM AND SINGULAR *THEY*

They has been used in the singular position for more years than not. Historically, it was quite common for *they* to be used when the antecedent for a pronoun was indefinite -- for instance, with the use of someone, everybody, whoever, a person, or an individual. Here are a few examples to demonstrate:

Geoffrey Chaucer from Canterbury Tales,

Whoso comes first to mill first gets meal ground;

I whimpered first and so did them confound.

They were right glad to hasten to excuse

things they had never done, save in my ruse.

(Qtd. in Lunsford and Connors 321)

and from other literary sources,

Everybody to rest themselves take.---Shakespeare

It's enough to drive anyone out of their senses.---George Bernard Shaw

Everyone in the house were in their beds.---Henry Fielding

A person can't help their birth.---William Thackeray

Anybody is as their land and air is.---Gertrude Stein

No man or woman can hesitate to give what they have.---Woodrow

Wilson

(223)

Also, *they* in the singular sense has been in widespread use with an indefinite antecedent for a long time and used by the likes of Swift, Austen, Shelley, Dickens, and Trollope (Lundberg).

With a growing desire to know how to speak properly by the middle classes in England, a demand for codified English grammar rules arose. Since academics were familiar with grammar rules that were natural to other

languages they had studied, they sometimes imposed these rules onto English. One imposed rule is to not end a sentence with a preposition. This rule works fine for Latin based languages for the reason that sentences just naturally do not end with prepositions. In Spanish, for example, a person could say ¿Deseas venir? (Do you want to come?), but never ¿Deseas venir con? (Do you want to come with?). This was not a natural rule of English.

Baugh and Cable had this to say about the eighteenth-century grammarians and reformers:

While acknowledging the results attained by the eighteenth-century grammarians and reformers, it is necessary to emphasize the serious limitations in nearly all of them. Their greatest weakness was, of course, their failure, except one or two conspicuous cases, to recognize the importance of usage as the sole arbiter in linguistic matters. They did not realize, or refused to acknowledge, that changes in language often appear to be capricious and unreasonable--in other words, are the results of forces too complex to be fully analyzed or predicted.

Accordingly they approached most questions in the belief that they could be solved by logic and that the solutions could be imposed upon the world by authoritative decree. Hence the constant attempt to legislate one construction into use and another out of use. (281)

The double negative and the differences between lay and lie are examples of such legislation. "The prescriptive distinction between the two verbs *lie* and *lay* was apparently first made in the second half of the eighteenth century" (Baugh and Cable 273). Robert Lowth and Lindley Murray in the eighteenth century prescribed that double negatives should not be used. Lowth wrote that "two Negatives in English destroy one another, or are equivalent to an Affirmative" (Pyles and Algeo 209). Lowth was applying the law in mathematics in which two negatives create a positive. Before this time the double negative was used in speech and literature by people like

Chaucer -- Forwhy to tellen nas (ne was) nat his entente (To tell not was not his intent) / To nevere no man (To never no man) (*Troilus and Criseyde* 1.738-39), He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde (He never yet no villainy not said) / In al his lyf unto no maner wight (In all his life unto no manner to no living thing) (*Canterbury Tales* lines 70-71) -- (Qtd. in Pyles and Algeo 209). Now use of the double negative has become so stigmatized that speakers of standard English never use it. The double negative is still quite common in some languages, however -- Spanish for example, *No hay nada* (There isn't nothing.), *No sé nada* (I don't know nothing.), and *No dije nada a nadie* (I didn't say nothing to nobody). In some languages, as it is in Spanish, the second 'not' would be to add extra emphasis or clarification.

The *singular they* also went through a change due to an individual's legislation and because most of the Indo-European languages that were used as models for grammar rules in English have a rule that says, when in doubt about the gender use the masculine (Corbett). The first grammarian to have advocated the use of *he* as a generic pronoun, according to Ann Bodine, was J. Kirby in 1746. In his book *A New English Grammar* he wrote, "The masculine Person answers to the general Name, which comprehends both Male and Female; as Any Person, who knows what he says" (Qtd. in Bodine 135). "Ultimately it took an Act of Parliament in 1850 to establish a sex-indefinite antecedent" (Zuber and Reed 519). The function of this act was to give a stronger voice of authority behind the condemnation of *singular they* and the promotion of the generic he. From this point, the *singular they* has been looked upon with heavy disapproval.

Prescriptive Pronominal Rules from Textbooks

Next, a short review of prescriptive rules for pronominal usage is presented as they have appeared in grammar books over the years.

Historical grammar books. The following is a definition from the 1939 book named, High School Self Taught (Copeland):

A pronoun is a word which stands for a noun (the prefix "pro-" is Latin, meaning "for"). A pronoun is not a definite name of anything; its identity with some noun is determined by its position in a sentence or paragraph, or its meaning may remain indefinite. Examples: he, she, it, I, we, they, that, this, one, each, someone, everybody, who, himself, myself, other, another, any, both, either. (184)

A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in person and number.

Difficulty with antecedents increases with such indefinite pronouns as everyone, someone, each, none. Remember that these pronouns are singular in number, so that if they serve as antecedents for personal pronouns, the personal pronouns must be singular to correspond. Examples:

- Wrong: Everyone must keep their place.
- Right: Everyone must keep his place.
- Wrong: Someone is going to miss their train.
- Right: Someone is going to miss his train.
- Wrong: No one can be denied their right to vote.
- Right: No one can be denied his right to vote.
- Wrong: Everyone should be told what they ought to do.
- Right: Everyone should be told what he ought to do.

Uses of the masculine gender for both men and women: When a mixed group is referred to as a whole, though it contains both men and women, masculine pronouns are used, except in legal documents (wherein "he or she" and "he and she" are laboriously repeated throughout). Notice the following:

Unnecessarily Precise: each member of our class must report his or her tardiness himself or herself.

Quite Correct: Each member of our class must report his tardiness himself. (This statement refers to both males and females, if both genders are represented in the class.) (193-94)

It is interesting to compare Copeland's opinion of pronominal usage to the following guide by Curme. It appears that Copeland decided to overlook the historical usage of *singular they*, but he did notice the usage of *him* or *her*, a future usage trend. Curme recognized *singular they's* historical usage and society's opinion of it in 1947.

The following is from the 1947 book English Grammar (Curme):

Agreement with Antecedent. A personal pronoun as a mere substitute for a noun must agree with its antecedent in gender, number, and person wherever there is a descriptive form to indicate these conceptions; but, of course, it takes a case form in accordance with the grammatical function it performs in the proposition in which it stands: "Your sister borrowed my dictionary yesterday. I met *her* this morning and *she* gave it back to me."

Where a pronoun or possessive adjective refers to a word plural in meaning, but in form being an indefinite pronoun in the singular, or a singular noun modified by an indefinite limiting adjective, it was once common to indicate the plural idea by the form of the following pronoun or possessive adjective; but it is now usual to put the pronoun or possessive adjective into the singular in accord with the form of the antecedent: Nobody knows what it is to lose a friend until *he* has lost *him* (formerly also until *they* have lost *him*). Everybody is discontented with *his* (formerly also *their*) lot in life. If the part deserves any comment, every considering Christian will make it *himself* (formerly also *themselves*). (213-214)

The second paragraph by Curme is interesting in that he is saying that the use of a plural pronoun with an indefinite antecedent was not only common but considered correct as well.

From the 1972 book Modern English; a practical reference guide (Frank):

The compounds with **-body**, **-one**, **-thing** are singular in form. When used as subjects these compounds require singular verbs—**Everyone** (or **everybody**) **is bringing lunch**. Subjects with the modifiers **each** or **every** also take singular verbs—**Every man is an individual**, **each student is bringing lunch**. Possessive pronouns that refer to compounds with **-body** or **-one**, and to nouns modified by **each** or **every** are usually masculine singular if the gender is not known, or if both males and females are being referred to—**Everyone is bringing his lunch**. **His** or **her** is sometimes used for a group consisting of males and females—**Everyone is bringing his or her lunch**. However, this construction is not only clumsy, but it gives the impression of being overprecise. In informal speech, **their** is frequently used in order to avoid having to make a choice for gender—**Everyone is bringing their lunch**.

When a general statement is made with the indefinite pronoun **one**, either **one** or **he** may make further reference to this pronoun:

One must do one's best.

or

One must do his best. (preferred American usage)

(33-34)

One can see that at this point the use of *they* for *he* or *she* would happen from time to time, but it was considered incorrect. Also at this time, the use of *he* or *she* was discouraged and *he* was the preferred form for use.

Developing a Generic Pronoun --

Singular They

Today the tides are turning, and while the use of *singular they* is not exactly considered to be in good form, it is at least appearing frequently and with less scorn. Leading up to today's position on the use of *singular they*, there have been several proposed lexical items to fill the supposed gap with regards to a gender neutral pronoun in the English language. It is the author's opinion that firstly, any proposed lexical item is doomed to fail; secondly, there is no gap to be filled; and thirdly, using *singular they* with a single antecedent is actually grammatical.

The arguments against introducing a lexical item into English to be a gender nonspecific pronoun are many. In a highly literate society there would be much resistance to the introduction into the language of a "strange" new word unless there is something new and tangible to which it may be attached. In fact, there have been over 80 lexical items introduced for a singular gender neutral pronoun alone, as noted in Grammar and Gender (Baron). Some examples of these failed items are ne, ter, thon, heer, et, ip, hesh, himmer, and hiser. In contrast, an example of an introduced item that was successful is microwaveable. As the microwave became popular there was a need for cookware that could be used in the microwave. Society dealt with this and a name naturally occurred with no dissent heard. To find additional examples of failed artificial items and natural adoptions one only needs to look at French. The French are constantly trying to get rid of English words that creep into the language. In replacement they propose words that are of French design -- for example the bill banning the use of 3500 specific

foreign words like chewing gum, bulldozer, software, and cheeseburger (Kraft 4A). Most of these words fail while the English words survive. Lastly, Robert T. Craig wrote that essentially there is

no basis for arguing about language, there is little practical point in doing so because linguistic change is a natural process and language as a social institution is too pervasive and too massive to be influenced decisively by anyone's conscious efforts either to preserve or to reform it. (4)

The second argument is that there is actually no gap to be filled in the English language for a gender nonspecific pronoun; thus there is no need to search for an artificial word. Historically, as has been demonstrated, *they* has been used in the singular and it is a naturally occurring lexical item. Marckwardt and Walcott in their 1938 book about current English usage cited The Oxford English Dictionary, which as early as 1526 noted the use of *they* with a variety of antecedents, including in general singular nouns that were gender-neutral. Also, as noted previously in this paper, one can find many examples of *they* in the singular in literature.

The third argument is related to the grammaticality of *singular they*. Some argue that the use of *they* is not grammatical because it is used to refer to an antecedent that is a singular. However, most of the antecedents are not referring to any one person or gender specifically. Thus, it can be said that the antecedent is in essence actually referring to both genders, nullifying any grammatical argument against the use of *singular they*.

It seems that others share this opinion. Alexander Bain in his 1879 book, A Higher English Grammar, had this to say on the subject:

the great work of simplification going on. Let us take one of the pronouns, which was universal in English some four hundred years ago, namely, nominative singular *thou*, accusative singular *thee*, nominative plural *ye*, accusative plural *you*, has now in ordinary

When both Genders are implied, it is allowable to use the Plural....Grammarians frequently call this construction an error: not reflecting that it is equally an error to apply 'his' to feminine subjects. The best writers furnish examples of the use of the plural as a mode of getting out of the difficulty. (310)

Other plurals have been used in the singular position and have been accepted as being quite grammatical. Baron, in Gender and Grammar, wrote:

there is a strong precedent in English for the use of plural pronoun in the singular: *we* used for *I*, a construction sometimes called the royal or the editorial *we*, occurs as early as Old English; *you*, originally limited to the plural, supplanted the second person singular *thou* during the fourteenth century, and now serves as a pronoun of common number as well as common gender. (193)

As a last note to this section a quote is included about language change and its effects on, *you*, from Otto Jespersen's 1894 book Progress in Language. He wrote about language change:

it is only by a slow and gradual development that conformity and regularity are brought about, especially in those words which are in most constant use. The rarer a word is, the more difficult it is to remember its several forms unless they resemble one another; accordingly, rare words are more exposed to being accommodated on the spur of the moment to the most regular patterns of inflexion. These regular patterns being more present to the speaker's mind, he pays no regard to the fact that the word in question "ought properly to be regular." Nor is it the rarer words alone which are reduced to rule: even in the case of the more frequently recurring words the levelling influences are at work; a greater and greater number of cases will run together, and irregularities will gradually disappear. Those little words which are used every minute, pronouns and so on, are uttered and heard so very often that their forms acquire an extreme power of resistance. And yet, even in these words we observe the great work of simplification going on. Let us take one of the clearest instances of all. The flexion of the second personal pronoun, which was universal in English some four hundred years ago, namely, nominative singular *thou*, accusative singular *thee*, nominative plural *ye*, accusative plural *you*, has now in ordinary

conversational and prose language given place to perfect simplicity and uniformity: nominative singular *you*, accusative singular *you*, nominative plural *you* and accusative plural *you*. (76-77)

Current Uses of Singular They

While it could be said that *singular they* may not be warmly received by everyone, it is fair to say that more people are warming to it, if only unconsciously.

The following are examples of what some more recent grammar books have to say about the *singular they*.

The Little, Brown Handbook (Fowler)

In speech we often solve the problem of the generic *he* by combining a plural pronoun with an indefinite pronoun, as in *Everyone brought their books to class*. But this construction violates the expectations of most readers, so it should be avoided in writing. (195)

The book, later on the page, continues by saying

In speech we commonly avoid such awkwardness with a plural pronoun: *After everyone left, I shut the door behind them*. In all but the most informal writing, however, you should rewrite the sentence: *After all the guests left, I shut the door behind them*. (195)

Harbrace College Handbook (Hodges)

Increasingly, however, writers are using plural pronouns to refer to singular antecedents that denote both sexes or either sex.

In fact, the fear of growing old is so great that every aged **person** is an insult and a threat to the society.

They remind us of our own death.-Sharon Curtin

As you make choices about pronouns referring to singular antecedents such as *everyone* and *a person*, consider not only your own preferences but those of your audience. (68)

The St. Martin's Handbook (Lunsford) addresses the subject in a different manner in a few of its editions. In 1989, in a discussion about the example:

"Everyone had their own theory about Marcia's resignation":

You will probably hear -- and perhaps use -- such sentences in conversation, but you should be careful about using them in writing. Although this usage is now gaining some acceptance, it is probably a good idea to talk to your instructor to see what he or she advises before using it in academic work. (223)

In 1992, The St. Martin's Handbook: Annotated Instructors Edition

(Lunsford), gave this semi paradoxical advise regarding *singular they*:

This lineage notwithstanding, it is now apt to be considered incorrect by many readers. However, because it provides a simple solution to many problems of sexist usage, it is becoming more and more widely accepted in academic and formal writing. For the moment, it is probably most prudent to counsel students to seek out other alternatives to the generic use of the masculine pronouns. (232)

Then advises the student:

You will probably hear -- and perhaps use -- such sentences in conversation, but be careful about using them in writing. Although this usage -- *everybody* with "the plural pronoun *their* -- is now gaining some acceptance, many readers will consider it excessively informal or even incorrect. *Everybody* is grammatically singular and hence calls for a singular pronoun. (233)

The 1994 book, A writer's handbook from A to Z (Gorrell), dedicated three sections to this subject: gender, indefinite pronouns, and nonsexist language.

The first section, given below, is representative of all three sections.

gender Gender, in a grammatical sense, refers to the classification of **nouns** and **pronouns** as masculine, feminine, neuter (no gender), or common (either gender).

GENDER OF NOUNS AND PRONOUNS

NOUNS

PRONOUNS

MASCULINE:	man, boy, father, rooster, John	he
FEMININE:	woman, girl, mother, hen, Jane	she
NEUTER:	car, tree, school, love, headache	it, they
COMMON:	person, child, parent, dog, student	they, everyone

Pronouns agree with the gender of their **antecedents**.

Jimmy Carter served *his* presidency from 1977 to 1981. (The masculine pronoun *his* agrees with its antecedent, *Jimmy Carter*.)

Agreement between pronouns and antecedents of common gender.

Although *he*, *him*, and *his* were once thought to function as common-gender pronouns, English does not have a singular pronoun to refer to nouns of either masculine or feminine gender (such as *person*, *child*, and *student*), to most **indefinite pronouns** (such as *everyone* and *somebody*), and to nouns modified by **indefinite adjectives** (such as *every person* and *each student*). Sometimes the plural pronoun *they* is used in a singular sense, but such usage is not widely accepted in formal writing.

COLLOQUIAL: If a student wants to register early, *they* should fill out an early-registration form.

COLLOQUIAL: If anyone wants to register early, *they* should fill out an early-registration form.

Many writers use plural nouns when both genders are intended.

If *students* want to register early, *they* should fill out early-registration forms.

If any *students* want to register early, *they* should fill out early-registration forms.

They also recast sentences to avoid using pronouns.

Students who want to register early should fill out early-registration forms. (113-114)

Singular They Usage Studies

In 1986, Miriam Watkins Meyers studied writing samples of 392 students at Metropolitan State University who were at least juniors in standing (average age of 34; gender 55% female). The writing sample was an educational goals statement as part of a required course, near the beginning of studies at Metro State, to plan students' upper division degree programs. The topic of the papers selected was "the educated person."

In the study it was found that 189 of the 392 students or "48% of the writers took other approaches than those requiring decisions on generic pronoun use" (8). The number of writers who made choices to use a consistent singular approach to the generic pronoun were as follows:

n = 138	Generic <u>he</u>	47 (34%)	
	Singular <u>they</u>	44 (32%)	
	<u>He/she</u> (etc.)	30 (22%)	
	<u>One</u>	11 (8%)	
	<u>She</u>	6 (4%)	(9)

According to the gender of the writer the following results were found:

n = 390	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Total</u>	
<u>He</u>	20 (9.3%)	27 (15.5%)	47 (12.1%)	
Singular <u>they</u>	22 (10.2%)	22 (12.6%)	44 (11.3%)	
<u>He/she</u>	17 (7.9%)	11 (6.3%)	28 (7.2%)	
<u>One</u>	5 (2.3%)	6 (3.4%)	11 (2.8%)	
<u>She</u>	6 (2.8%)	0	6 (1.5%)	(9)

In 1992, Michael Newman made a study of television programs such as "Nightline," "Crossfire," "The MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour," "Geraldo," "Newsline New York," "The Oprah Winfrey Show," "Donahue," "Sally Jessy Raphael," and "Larry King Live." In this study, of the 399 pronouns 119 were determined to correspond to indefinite antecedents. The 119, or 30% of all pronoun antecedents, were broken down as follows:

They	he	she	he or she	it	mix
91	16	7	1	2	2
23%	4%	2%	0	1%	1%

These studies and writers' manuals indicate the acceptance of *singular they*. It also appears that government is aiding in the transition to the use of *singular they*. In 1986, the Minnesota legislature passed a law saying:

The words "he" and "she" will be banished from statutes, along with other "gender-specific" terms such as "fireman" and "craftsman." When the 10-volume set of statutes is published Oct 1, it will refer to "firefighters" as "skilled workers." The pronouns "he" and "she" often will be avoided by repeating a person's title. (Pinney 1B)

And more recently the residents in Vermont voted on November 8, 1994, to eliminate the nine *he*'s from the constitution to make it gender neutral (Brokaw).

This chapter has presented the history of the pronoun *they*, prescriptive grammar rules for the pronoun, and studies on the usage of the pronoun. The next chapters will focus on a study done by the author on the acceptability of *singular they* by high school educators and university academics.

in a paper from a student in your class for appropriate language and, if needed, provide suggestions for improvement." Of the 23 sentences, only ten contained examples of singular *they*, while the other 13 acted as distracters.

Chapter III

Surveyed individuals. People selected for the survey came from two

institutions of education: **METHOD OF ANALYSIS** St. Cloud State

University. From Braham all 23 of the teachers were selected to be surveyed

The focus of this research is the current usage of the pronoun *they* except one who had prior knowledge of the topic of the thesis. A survey to check with a singular antecedent, or *singular they*, in English. A survey to check the hypothesis that *singular they* is considered acceptable, at least The pool of surveyed individuals at St. Cloud State University was selected from the list of faculty and professional support staff in the SCSU unconsciously, was distributed to two schools: Braham High School and St. Cloud State University. Educators were chosen to be surveyed because they are the purveyors of norms, and if *singular they* is not being seen as incorrect it will be used more often. The data received from the returned surveys were broken down according to demographic factors for a better analysis and greater understanding. This chapter discusses the data collection process: the survey, the individuals surveyed, and the compiling of the results.

Data Collection

The survey. The survey had two parts, A and B. Part A consisted of six demographic questions: age group, gender, educational level, number of years teaching, level of courses taught (grade level or university level), and subject matter taught. Part B presented 23 sentences and asked the surveyed individual to "Please read the following as if they were sentences appearing

in a paper from a student in your class for appropriate language and, if needed, provide suggestions for improvement." Of the 23 sentences, only ten contained examples of *singular they*, while the other 13 acted as distracters.

Surveyed individuals. People selected for the survey came from two institutions of education: Braham High School and St. Cloud State University. From Braham all 23 of the teachers were selected to be surveyed except one who had prior knowledge of the topic of the thesis.

The pool of surveyed individuals at St. Cloud State University was selected from the list of faculty and professional support staff in the SCSU '94 - '95 Directory. People with prior knowledge of the topic for the survey and/or thesis were eliminated from the pool of potential people to be surveyed. The remaining individuals were then numbered and selected from a table of random numbers. A total of 130 individuals from the university were ultimately selected to be surveyed.

The selected individuals were then mailed a letter explaining the purpose of the survey and assuring them of their anonymity; the survey; a postage paid envelope for the return of the survey; and a postcard, also with the postage paid, stating the surveyed individual's address if the results of the study were desired.

Compiling of the data and method of analysis. In analyzing the data it was determined that a statistical analysis was not appropriate for two reasons: the number of returns was small, and the sample from the high school was not random. Thus the information from the returned surveys was entered

into a spreadsheet and then tabulated, a realistic method of analysis under these circumstances.

A high rate of return from the high school was expected since it was small and the author was well known there. However, only ten surveys (45.45%) were returned. A fairly low rate of return from the university was expected, around 30 to 35 out of 130. The number returned from the university was higher in number than the high school but still lower than preferred. The demographic information -- the level of education of the surveyed person (bachelor, master, doctorate), subject taught (humanities, non-humanities), level (college, high school), age group of the person (22-32, 33-43, 44-54, 55 and above), the person's gender (male, female) -- was entered into the spreadsheet. For the sentences, a T was entered (meaning it is true that *singular they* was accepted), or an F (meaning a suggestion to improve a *singular they* was made).

The information gathered was then analyzed according to percentages: What was the composition of the surveyed population in terms of age, gender, education, and level and subject taught?; What was the percentage of the sentences that had a T or F, and what was the demographic composition of the people marking T and F?

Surveyed Population Demographics

Table 1 is a breakdown of the demographics of the people who responded to the survey. The total population was 31 with classifications according to the people's educational background, the subject they taught, the level at which they taught, their ages, and their gender.

Chapter IV

ANALYSIS

Table 1

The results of this study were interesting, though they were confounded by several problems. The study does show an acceptance of *singular they*. Not everyone embraces the usage, but many people do shift back and forth in their use of it, though probably unconsciously. It is certain that slowly, as with all natural changes, we will see an increased usage of *singular they*, especially if such a strong demand by society for inclusive language continues.

As previously mentioned, the information was analyzed according to percentages. The results will be surveyed in the following order:

1) demographics of respondents, 2) responses by gender, 3) response rates for individual sentences, 4) overall data for *singular they* sentences in comparison to the overall percentage of correct and incorrect grammar suggestions for those sentences without a *singular they*.

As previously stated, more surveys were sent out to university faculty than to high school teachers because there were more people in the university from which to choose. Because of this fact, there were more returned surveys from the university and a larger population having a

Surveyed Population Demographics

Table 1 is a breakdown of the demographics of the people who responded to the survey. The total population was 31 with classifications according to the people's educational background, the subject they taught, the level at which they taught, their ages, and their gender.

Table 1

Overall Survey Demographics

n = 31			
Education:		Age:	
Bachelor	7 (22.6%)	22-32	2 (6.45%)
Master	10 (32.26)	33-43	11 (35.48)
Doctorate	14 (45.16)	44-54	10 (32.26)
		55-55+	8 (25.81)
Gender:			
Female	14 (45.16)		
Male	17 (54.84)		
Level:		Subject taught:	
College	21 (67.74)	Humanities	19 (61.29)
High School	10 (32.26)	Non-Humanities	12 (38.71)

As previously stated, more surveys were sent out to university faculty than to high school teachers because there were more people in the university from which to choose. Because of this fact, there were more returned surveys from the university and a larger population having a

master's degree or a doctorate (Figure 1). Also, a high rate of return from the high school and a low return rate from the university were expected. This would equal out the responses for the two institutions. However, the return from the 22 surveys sent to the high school was only 45.45% (10), while the return from the 130 sent to the university was only 16.15% (21). Overall of the 31 returned surveys (Figure 2), college returns made up 67.74% (21) and high school returns made up 32.26% (10) .

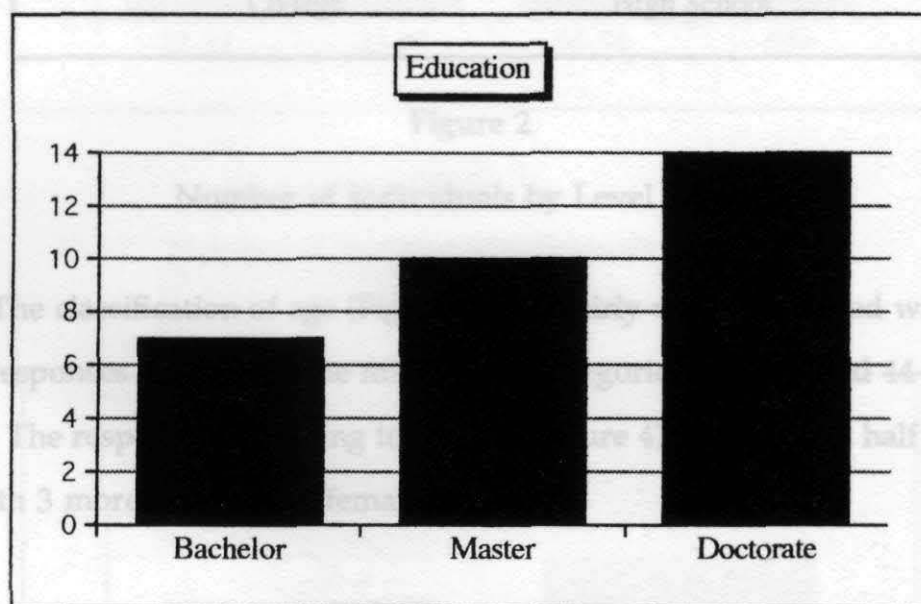


Figure 1

Number of Individuals by Educational Level

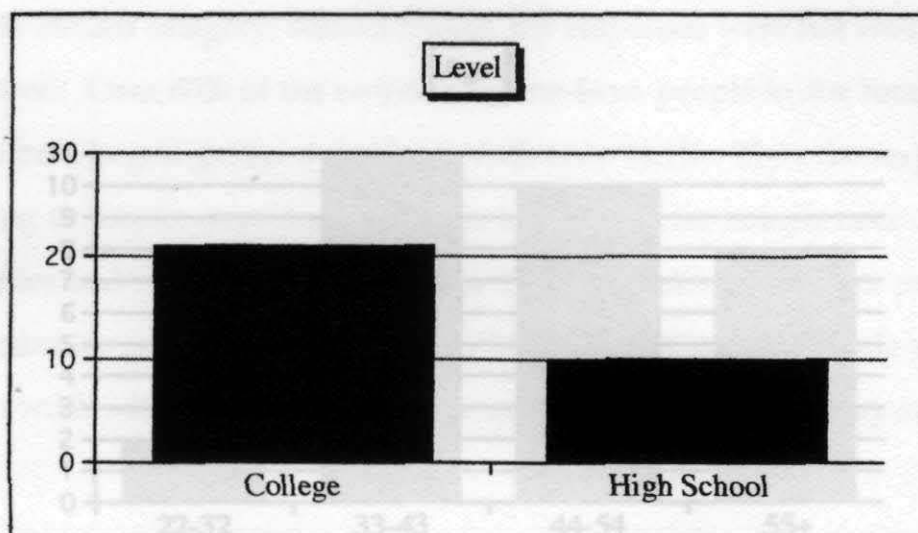


Figure 2

Number of Individuals by Level Taught

The classification of age (Figure 3) was fairly well distributed with most of the responses falling into the middle two categories of 33-43 and 44-54 years of age. The responses according to gender (Figure 4) were almost half and half with 3 more males than females.

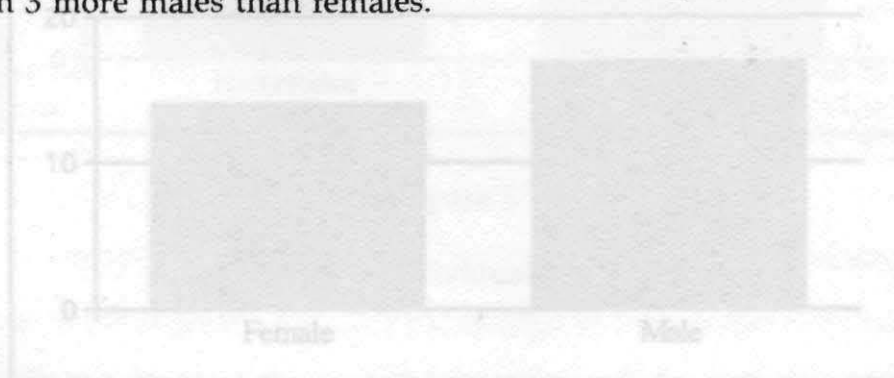


Figure 4

Number of Individuals by Gender

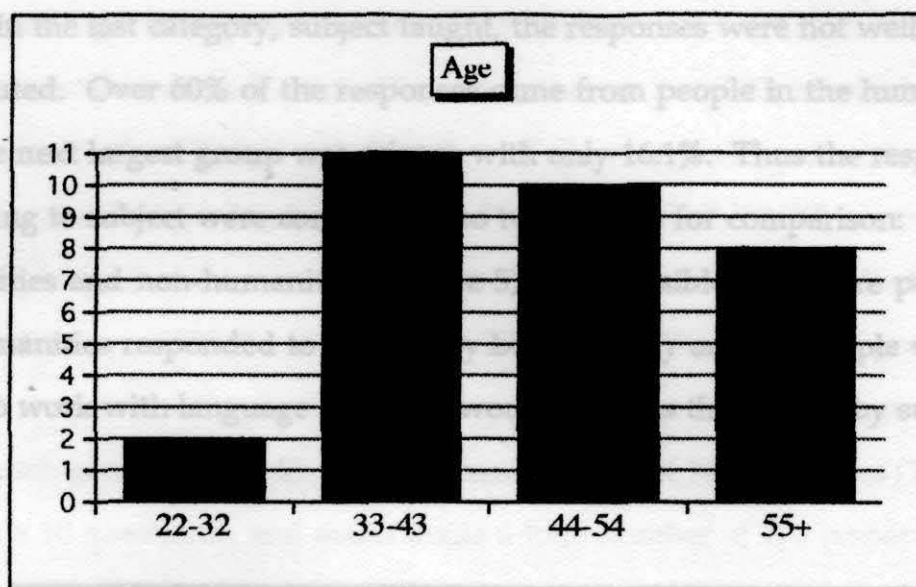


Figure 3

Number of Surveyed Individuals by Age

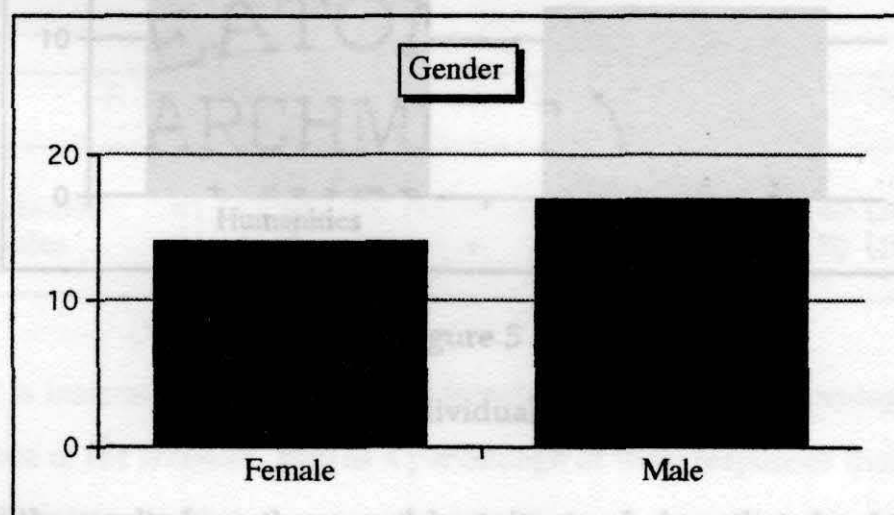


Figure 4

Number of Individuals by Gender

In the last category, subject taught, the responses were not well distributed. Over 60% of the responses came from people in the humanities, and the next largest group was science with only 16.1%. Thus the responses according to subject were combined into two groups for comparison: humanities and non-humanities (Figure 5). It is possible that more people in the humanities responded to the survey because they are the people whose job is to work with language and who would feel less threatened by such a survey.

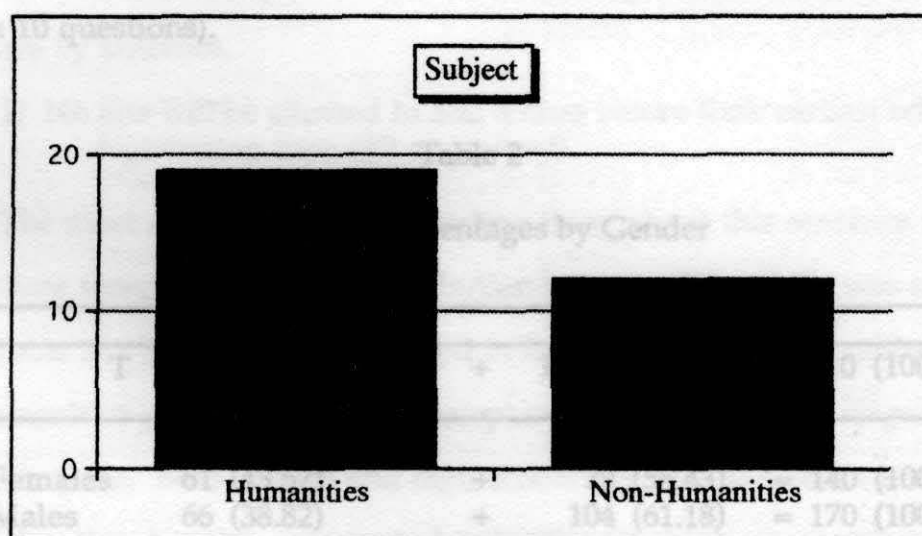


Figure 5

Number of Individuals by Subject

In the results from the spreadsheet, it was obvious that six of the ten sentences that contained a *singular they* from the survey were important. In these sentences the *singular they* was seen as acceptable the most, or at least went unnoticed the most, and in which a T was marked in the spreadsheet.

These sentences, to be presented and analyzed later, were 4, 12, 17, and 19, where there were more T's than F's; and sentences 2 and 22, in which there were more F's than T's but only by a few. Following these sentences, the four sentences that had predominately more F's than T's (6, 8, 10, 15) are presented and analyzed (all of the survey sentences may be found in Appendix E) .

Overall there were 127 T's (40.97%) and 183 F's (59.03%) out of 310 possible.

A very interesting breakdown of responses was the percentage of T's to F's for each gender (Table 2). Females made a total of 140 responses (14 females x 10 questions), and males made a total number of 170 responses (17 males x 10 questions).

Table 2

Response Percentages by Gender

T 127 (40.97%)		+	F 183 (59.03%) = 310 (100%)	
Females	61 (43.57)	+	79 (56.43)	= 140 (100)
Males	66 (38.82)	+	104 (61.18)	= 170 (100)

It is interesting to note that the females had a higher percentage rate of acceptance of the *singular they* as a percentage of their responses than did the males. This is most likely because the generic *he* is less offensive to males than it is to females, causing females to use *singular they* more often. (This information is reviewed again later in the chapter along with information from the other classifications.)

Table 3

Demographic Response Rates for Sentence 1

Demographical Breakdown of Survey
Responses for Sentences

The accepted sentences. It is possible that the *singular they* sentences used in the survey seemed to be taken out of context and therefore would be unclear. If they were determined to be unclear that could then account for the acceptance of the *singular they*. The following is a breakdown of the responses by sentence.

- 1) No one will be allowed to add a class before their earliest scheduled registration time (#2 on survey).

The most significant and interesting thing about this sentence is that, while there were more F's, the distribution between T's and F's was almost even (Table 3). This was also reflected in the responses in humanities. The non-humanities group had a 50/50 acceptance/rejection rate of *singular they* in this sentence. Both college and high school teachers had seven acceptances of *singular they*, but this represented a significantly higher acceptance rate for the high school (70%) than the college (30%).

Table 3
Demographic Response Rates for Sentence 1

n=31		T	F
Gender			
Female		7 (50)	7 (50)
Male		7 (41.81)	10 (58.82)
Age			
22-32		0 (0)	2 (100)
33-43		6 (54.55)	5 (45.45)
44-54		3 (30)	7 (70)
55-55+		5 (62.50)	3 (37.50)
Education			
Bachelor		5 (71.43)	2 (28.57)
Master		4 (40)	6 (60)
Doctorate		5 (35.71)	9 (64.29)
Subject			
Humanities		8 (42.11)	11 (57.89)
Non-Humanities		6 (50)	6 (50)
Level			
College		7 (33.33)	14 (66.67)
High School		7 (70)	3 (30)

- 2) There is no legal requirement that anyone give us any information or that they use our financial aid service (#4 on survey).

Demographic Response Rates for Sentence 2

The most interesting demographic item for this question is that the T's in the humanities' responses, for the most part, mirrored those of the overall population in the survey (Table 4), and non-humanities following closely behind. That is, the T responses outnumbered the F responses. Females also used more T's in this example than did the males. Lastly, the high school overwhelmingly accepted *singular they*.

Female	9 (64.29)	5 (35.71)
Age		
22-32	0 (0)	2 (100)
33-43	9 (81.82)	2 (18.18)
44-54	3 (30)	7 (70)
55-55+	4 (50)	4 (50)
Education		
Bachelor	6 (85.71)	1 (14.29)
Master	4 (40)	6 (60)
Doctorate	6 (42.86)	8 (57.14)
Subject		
Humanities	10 (52.63)	9 (47.37)
Non-Humanities	6 (50)	6 (50)
Level		
College	7 (33.33)	14 (66.67)
High School	9 (90)	1 (10)

3) No one will be able to determine the union dues on their 1994 taxes
(\$12 on survey)

Table 4
Demographic Response Rates for Sentence 2

The item most significant in this sentence is that at least 50% of the

n=31		T 16 (51.6%)		F 15 (48.4%)	
Gender					
	Female	9	(64.29)	5	(35.71)
	Male	7	(41.81)	10	(58.82)
Age					
	22-32	0	(0)	2	(100)
	33-43	9	(81.82)	2	(18.18)
	44-54	3	(30)	7	(70)
	55-55+	4	(50)	4	(50)
Education					
	Bachelor	6	(85.71)	1	(14.29)
	Master	4	(40)	6	(60)
	Doctorate	6	(42.86)	8	(57.14)
Subject					
	Humanities	10	(52.63)	9	(47.37)
	Non-Humanities	6	(50)	6	(50)
Level					
	College	7	(33.33)	14	(66.67)
	High School	9	(90)	1	(10)

- 3) No one will be able to deduct any union dues on their 1994 taxes (#12 on survey).

Demographic Response Rates for Sentence 3

The item most significant in this sentence is that at least 50% of the people in every education classification accepted *singular they*, and over 70% accepted it at the bachelor level (Table 5). In this sentence the overall average was not followed by the people in the humanities, but was passed by the non-humanities group. Once again the females had a higher percentage rate of T's than did the males. Both the college and the high school had over a 50% acceptance rate.

Age	0 (0)	2 (100)
32		
33-43	7 (63.64)	4 (36.36)
44-54	4 (40)	6 (60)
55-55+	6 (75)	4 (25)
Education		
Bachelor	5 (71.43)	2 (28.57)
Master	5 (50)	5 (50)
Doctorate	7 (50)	7 (50)
Subject		
Humanities	9 (47.37)	10 (52.63)
Non-Humanities	8 (66.67)	4 (33.33)
Level		
College	11 (52.38)	10 (47.62)
High School	6 (60)	4 (40)

Table 5
Demographic Response Rates for Sentence 3

n=31			
	T	17 (54.8%)	F 14 (45.2%)
Gender			
Female	8	(57.14)	6 (42.86)
Male	9	(52.94)	8 (47.06)
Age			
22-32	0	(0)	2 (100)
33-43	7	(63.64)	4 (36.36)
44-54	4	(40)	6 (60)
55-55+	6	(75)	4 (25)
Education			
Bachelor	5	(71.43)	2 (28.57)
Master	5	(50)	5 (50)
Doctorate	7	(50)	7 (50)
Subject			
Humanities	9	(47.37)	10 (52.63)
Non-Humanities	8	(66.67)	4 (33.33)
Level			
College	11	(52.38)	10 (47.62)
High School	6	(60)	4 (40)

- 4) This work group will be dissolving since their work on this issue is done (#17 on survey).

Demographic Response Rates for Sentence 4

For this statement a few more males had T's than did females, and the humanities, once again, did not follow the overall acceptance rate of *singular they* (Table 6). The non-humanities group, however, accepted it at a rate of 66.67%. In the age classification all of the groups except 44-54 had an acceptance rate above 50%, the bachelor and doctorate groups both had acceptance rates above 57%, and the high school had a 60% rate while the college had a rate above 47%.

	Female	Male
Age		
22-32	1 (50)	1 (50)
33-43	6 (54.55)	5 (45.45)
44-54	4 (40)	6 (60)
55-55+	5 (62.50)	3 (37.50)
Education		
Bachelor	4 (57.14)	3 (42.86)
Master	4 (40)	6 (60)
Doctorate	8 (57.14)	6 (42.86)
Subject		
Humanities	8 (42.11)	11 (57.89)
Non-Humanities	8 (66.67)	4 (33.33)
Level		
College	10 (47.62)	11 (52.38)
High School	6 (60)	4 (40)

Table 6
Demographic Response Rates for Sentence 4

In the age classification all but the individuals in the age group 44-54

n=31

	T	16 (51.6%)	F	15 (48.4%)
Gender				
Female	7	(50)	7	(50)
Male	9	(52.94)	8	(47.06)
Age				
22-32	1	(50)	1	(50)
33-43	6	(54.55)	5	(45.45)
44-54	4	(40)	6	(60)
55-55+	5	(62.50)	3	(37.50)
Education				
Bachelor	4	(57.14)	3	(42.86)
Master	4	(40)	6	(60)
Doctorate	8	(57.14)	6	(42.86)
Subject				
Humanities	8	(42.11)	11	(57.89)
Non-Humanities	8	(66.67)	4	(33.33)
Level				
College	10	(47.62)	11	(52.38)
High School	6	(60)	4	(40)

- 5) Each worker does intake on their own cases even if they only have a service case on the client (#19 on survey).

In the age classification all but the individuals in the age group 44-54 had an acceptance rate above 60%, and in the education classification all had an acceptance rate above 40% (Table 7). The male group had an acceptance rate of almost 16% higher than the female group for this sentence. The humanities had almost a 50% acceptance level while the non-humanities was above 58%. In the surveys from the high school there was an acceptance rate of 70%.

Age	22-32	2 (100)	0 (0)
	33-43	7 (63.64)	4 (36.36)
	44-54	2 (20)	8 (80)
	55-55+	5 (62.50)	3 (37.50)
Education	Bachelor	5 (77.43)	2 (28.57)
	Master	4 (40)	6 (60)
	Doctorate	7 (50)	7 (50)
Subject	Humanities	9 (47.37)	10 (52.63)
	Non-Humanities	7 (58.33)	5 (41.67)
Level	College	9 (42.86)	12 (57.14)
	High School	7 (70)	3 (30)

6) Anyone interested in making lateral transfer within this job classification must indicate their interest within 7 days of the date the job posting was last posted.

Table 7
Demographic Response Rates for Sentence 5

n=31		T	16 (51.6%)	F	15 (48.4%)
Gender					
	Female		6 (42.86)		8 (57.14)
	Male		10 (58.82)		7 (41.18)
Age					
	22-32		2 (100)		0 (0)
	33-43		7 (63.64)		4 (36.36)
	44-54		2 (20)		8 (80)
	55-55+		5 (62.50)		3 (37.50)
Education					
	Bachelor		5 (77.43)		2 (28.57)
	Master		4 (40)		6 (60)
	Doctorate		7 (50)		7 (50)
Subject					
	Humanities		9 (47.37)		10 (52.63)
	Non-Humanities		7 (58.33)		5 (41.67)
Level					
	College		9 (42.86)		12 (57.14)
	High School		7 (70)		3 (30)

- 6) Anyone interested in making a lateral transfer within this job classification must indicate their interest within 7 days of the date of the job posting (#22 on survey).

The male and the female groups each had a similar acceptance rate for this sentence (Table 8). Also, the acceptance rate of this sentence decreased as education increased. Both the non-humanities and the high school groups, once again, had fairly high acceptance rates, 58.33% and 60% respectively.

Gender	Male	7 (41.18)	10 (52.82)
Age			
	22-32	1 (50)	1 (50)
	33-43	6 (54.55)	5 (45.45)
	44-54	3 (30)	7 (70)
	55-55+	3 (37.50)	5 (62.50)
Education			
	Bachelor	4 (57.14)	3 (42.86)
	Master	4 (40)	6 (60)
	Doctorate	5 (35.71)	9 (64.29)
Subject			
	Humanities	6 (31.58)	13 (68.42)
	Non-Humanities	7 (58.33)	5 (41.67)
Level			
	College	7 (33.33)	14 (66.67)
	High School	6 (60)	4 (40)

In these sentences with higher rates of acceptance, the rate did not surpass 50%; however, it did reach 40.97%. Furthermore, in 40% of the sentences (4 of the 10 sentences) it did surpass the 50% marker. Females, in general, accepted *singular they* more frequently than did males. Additionally, the age group with the largest population, ages 33-43, consistently had over a 50% acceptance rate for *singular they* in the six sentences presented in detail above. The humanities, the group with the highest number of returned

Table 8

Demographic Response Rates for Sentence 6

n=31		T	13 (41.9%)	F	18 (58.1%)
Gender					
	Female		6 (42.86)		8 (57.14)
	Male		7 (41.18)		10 (52.82)
Age					
	22-32		1 (50)		1 (50)
	33-43		6 (54.55)		5 (45.45)
	44-54		3 (30)		7 (70)
	55-55+		3 (37.50)		5 (62.50)
Education					
	Bachelor		4 (57.14)		3 (42.86)
	Master		4 (40)		6 (60)
	Doctorate		5 (35.71)		9 (64.29)
Subject					
	Humanities		6 (31.58)		13 (68.42)
	Non-Humanities		7 (58.33)		5 (41.67)
Level					
	College		7 (33.33)		14 (66.67)
	High School		6 (60)		4 (40)

In these sentences with higher rates of acceptance, the rate did not surpass 50%; however, it did reach 40.97%. Furthermore, in 40% of the sentences (4 of the 10 sentences) it did surpass the 50% marker. Females, in general, accepted *singular they* more frequently than did males. Additionally, the age group with the largest population, ages 33-43, consistently had over a 50% acceptance rate for *singular they* in the six sentences presented in detail above. The humanities, the group with the highest number of returned

surveys, closely followed the overall acceptance rate of *singular they* and never broke the 50% acceptance level. Conversely, the non-humanities never had below a 50% acceptance rate and got up to 66%. While the college group only had one sentence accepted over 50%, all of the acceptance rates from the high school group were above 60% and reached as high as 90%.

It is interesting to note that while almost all the returns had rejected this sentence, there was one group that had a strong acceptance of it and three others that had acceptance rates in the 40% range. The high school had a 70% acceptance rate. In the age group 33-34 there was an acceptance rate of 45.45%, the individuals in the bachelor group accepted it at 42.86%, and lastly the non-humanities group had an acceptance rate of 50% (Table 9).

The failed sentences. While the previous sentences were those where *singular they* was accepted most often by the people surveyed, the following sentences (6, 8, 10, 15) generally had low acceptance rates.

- 7) Petitions must be signed by the student and their academic advisor before the graduate office will act upon them (#6 on survey).

It is interesting to note that while almost all the returns had rejected this sentence, there was one group that had a strong acceptance of it and three others that had acceptance rates in the 40% range. The high school had a 70% acceptance rate. In the age group 33-34 there was an acceptance rate of 45.45%, the individuals in the bachelor group accepted it at 42.86%, and lastly the non-humanities group had an acceptance rate of 50% (Table 9).

Subject		
Bachelor	3 (42.86)	4 (57.14)
Master	3 (30)	6 (70)
Doctorate	3 (21.43)	11 (78.57)
Level		
Humanities	4 (21.05)	15 (78.95)
Non-Humanities	6 (50)	6 (50)
College	2 (9.52)	19 (90.48)
High School	7 (70)	3 (30)

8) If the mistletoe is an irritant, have them remove it
(#8 on survey)

Table 9
Demographic Response Rates for Sentence 7

As with the previous sentence, four groups had acceptance rates above

n=31			
		T	F
		9 (29.03%)	22 (70.97%)
Gender			
	Female	4 (28.57)	10 (71.43)
	Male	5 (29.41)	12 (70.59)
Age			
	22-32	0 (0)	2 (100)
	33-43	5 (45.45)	5 (54.55)
	44-54	2 (20)	8 (80)
	55-55+	2 (20)	6 (75)
Education			
	Bachelor	3 (42.86)	4 (57.14)
	Master	3 (30)	6 (70)
	Doctorate	3 (21.43)	11 (78.57)
Subject			
	Humanities	4 (21.05)	15 (78.95)
	Non-Humanities	6 (50)	6 (50)
Level			
	College	2 (9.52)	19 (90.48)
	High School	7 (70)	3 (30)

- 8) If the mistletoe is an irritant to someone, have them remove it
 (#8 on survey).

As with the previous sentence, four groups had acceptance rates above 40%. However, for this sentence these four were the female group, the master group, non-humanities group, and high school group. The non-humanities and the high school were two groups from the last question that also had higher acceptance rates. The only classification with no acceptance rate above 40% was age (Table 10).

22-32	0 (0)	2 (100)
33-43	4 (36.36)	7 (63.64)
44-54	3 (30)	7 (70)
55-55+	3 (25)	6 (75)
Education		
Bachelor	2 (28.57)	5 (71.43)
Master	4 (40)	6 (60)
Doctorate	3 (21.43)	11 (78.57)
Subject		
Humanities	4 (21.05)	15 (78.95)
Non-Humanities	5 (41.67)	7 (58.33)
Level		
College	5 (23.81)	16 (76.19)
High School	4 (40)	6 (60)

Table 10
Demographic Response Rates for Sentence 8

n=31		T	9 (29.03%)	F	22 (70.97%)
Gender					
	Female		6 (42.86)		8 (57.14)
	Male		3 (17.65)		14 (82.35)
Age					
	22-32		0 (0)		2 (100)
	33-43		4 (36.36)		7 (63.64)
	44-54		3 (30)		7 (70)
	55-55+		3 (25)		6 (75)
Education					
	Bachelor		2 (28.57)		5 (71.43)
	Master		4 (40)		6 (60)
	Doctorate		3 (21.43)		11 (78.57)
Subject					
	Humanities		4 (21.05)		15 (78.95)
	Non-Humanities		5 (41.67)		7 (58.33)
Level					
	College		5 (23.81)		16 (76.19)
	High School		4 (40)		6 (60)

- 9) Each school's smoking policy must be in compliance with federal guidelines, but each school defines their own policy within those guidelines (#10 on survey).

Though overall this sentence did not get an acceptance rate higher than 38.71%, there were seven groups with acceptance rates over 40% and four of those seven over 50%. The groups in the 40% range of acceptance were male in gender, and master and doctorate in education. Three groups in the 50% range were the 22-32 age group and the 33-43 age group and the high school group from the level classification. One group, non-humanities from the subject classification, had an acceptance rate of above 65% (Table 11).

Age	55-55+	3 (37.50)	5 (62.50)
Education	Bachelor	2 (28.57)	3 (71.43)
	Master	4 (40)	6 (60)
	Doctorate	6 (42.86)	8 (57.14)
Subject	Humanities	4 (21.05)	15 (78.95)
	Non-Humanities	8 (66.67)	4 (33.33)
Level	College	7 (33.33)	14 (66.67)
	High School	5 (50)	5 (50)

10) If the client answers "yes" to Table 11 inquiry, they must list the reason (#15 on survey).

Demographic Response Rates for Sentence 9

For this question there was only one group that had a favorable

n=31			
		T 12 (38.71%)	F 19 (61.29%)
<hr/>			
Gender			
	Female	4 (28.57)	8 (57.14)
	Male	8 (47.06)	9 (52.94)
Age			
	22-32	1 (50)	1 (50)
	33-43	6 (54.55)	5 (45.45)
	44-54	2 (20)	8 (80)
	55-55+	3 (37.50)	5 (62.50)
Education			
	Bachelor	2 (28.57)	3 (71.43)
	Master	4 (40)	6 (60)
	Doctorate	6 (42.86)	8 (57.14)
Subject			
	Humanities	4 (21.05)	15 (78.95)
	Non-Humanities	8 (66.67)	4 (33.33)
Level			
	College	7 (33.33)	14 (66.67)
	High School	5 (50)	5 (50)

- 10) If the client answers "yes" to the inquiry, they must list the reason (#15 on survey).

Demographic Response Rates for Sentence 10

For this question there was only one group that had a favorable acceptance rate: 22-32 (50%) from the age classification. The next highest group was high school with an acceptance rate of 30%; followed by the female group, 28.57%; and the 33-43 age group, 27.27% (Table 12).

	Female	4 (28.57)	8 (57.14)
	Male	1 (5.88)	16 (94.12)
Age			
22-32		1 (50)	1 (50)
33-43		3 (27.27)	8 (72.73)
44-54		0 (0)	10 (100)
55-55+		1 (12.50)	5 (62.50)
Education			
Bachelor		0 (0)	7 (100)
Master		2 (20)	8 (80)
Doctorate		3 (21.43)	11 (78.57)
Subject			
Humanities		3 (15.79)	16 (84.21)
Non-Humanities		2 (16.67)	10 (78.37)
Level			
College		2 (9.52)	19 (90.48)
High School		3 (30)	7 (70)

Table 12

Demographic Response Rates for Sentence 10

n=31		T	5 (16.13%)	F	26 (83.67%)
Gender					
	Female	4	(28.57)	8	(57.14)
	Male	1	(5.88)	16	(94.12)
Age					
	22-32	1	(50)	1	(50)
	33-43	3	(27.27)	8	(72.73)
	44-54	0	(0)	10	(100)
	55-55+	1	(12.50)	5	(62.50)
Education					
	Bachelor	0	(0)	7	(100)
	Master	2	(20)	8	(80)
	Doctorate	3	(21.43)	11	(78.57)
Subject					
	Humanities	3	(15.79)	16	(84.21)
	Non-Humanities	2	(16.67)	10	(78.57)
Level					
	College	2	(9.52)	19	(90.48)
	High School	3	(30)	7	(70)

A comparison of percentages for all sentences. An interesting comparison is to look at the overall rate of acceptance in the sentences with *singular they* to the rate of grammar error in the other sentences. The suggestions for improvement for the other sentences that did not contain *singular they* are examined here. These suggestions would have either been grammatically correct or incorrect (Table 13), and the percentages are examined in comparison to the *singular they* percentages (Table 14) which were either True (*Singular They* was accepted) or False (a suggestion avoiding *Singular They* was made).

It is interesting to note the accuracy with which grammar suggestions for these sentences were made. Generally speaking, there was a very high level of correctness in the suggestions for the sentences. The lowest rate of correctness, 78.26%, came from the high school group while the highest, 96.15%, came from the 22-32 age group. There was a rate of correctness of 90% or above in at least one of the groups for each classification: female (90.76%), age 22-32 (96.15), age 44-54 (92.06), age 55-55+ (90.32), doctorate (94.51), humanities (91.19%), college (93.05%). The other groups in each classification also had high rates of correctness as can be seen below (Table 13).

With the correctness of the grammar suggestions for the sentences fresh in mind, a comparison with the *singular they* sentences is now presented. One could look at the failure to suggest the elimination of *singular they* as an error; however, it is looked upon here as a sign of linguistic change. It is clear to see from Table 13 that the surveyed individuals know English grammar which gives even more credence in their

judgment to accept the singular *they* sentences. The singular *they* sentences were accepted the least at 26% in the high school group and the greatest at 60%

in the high school group. Grammar Suggestions of over 90% (female (90.76%), age 55-55+ (90.32%), doctorate (94.51%)) had

	Percent	Correct	Incorrect
Gender			
Female		90.76%	9.24%
Male		84.95	15.05
Age			
22-32		96.15	3.85
33-43		85.14	14.86
44-54		92.06	7.94
55-55+		90.32	9.68
Education			
Bachelor		82.89	17.11
Master		86.15	13.85
Doctorate		94.51	5.49
Subject			
Humanities		91.19	8.81
Non-Humanities		82.28	17.72
Level			
College		93.05	6.95
High School		78.26	21.74

With the correctness of the grammar suggestions for the sentences fresh in mind, a comparison with the *singular they* sentences is now presented. One could look at the failure to suggest the elimination of *singular they* as an error; however, it is looked upon here as a sign of linguistic change. It is clear to see from Table 13 that the surveyed individuals know English grammar which gives even more credence in their

judgment to accept the *singular they* sentences. The *singular they* sentences were accepted the least at 26% in the 44-54 age group and the greatest at 60% in the high school group. Three groups with correct grammar suggestions of over 90% [female (90.76%), age 55-55+ (90.32%), doctorate (94.51%)] had acceptance rates of *singular they* of over 40% [female (43.57%), age 55-55+ (45.68%), doctorate (40.46%)]. Moreover, all of the classifications had an acceptance rate above 40%: female (43.57%), age 33-43 (54.13%), age 55-55+ (45.68%), bachelor (54.93%), doctorate (40.46%), non-humanities (52.50%), high school (60%). All of the other groups except age 44-54 had acceptance rates above 30% as seen below (Table 14).

		True	False
Education	Bachelor	54.93	45.08
	Master	38.38	61.62
	Doctorate	40.46	59.54
Subject	Humanities	34.21	65.79
	Non-Humanities	52.50	47.50
Level	College	31.90	68.10
	High School	60	40

It appeared there may be a relation between the distance from the antecedent to the *singular they* as to whether it was accepted or not. The closer the antecedent to the *singular they* the lower chance of it being accepted. This theory, however, did not hold true. In some of the accepted *singular they* sentences the antecedent and the *singular they* were actually closer than they were in sentences that were not accepted. Sentence #4 and #5 were two of these.

Table 14

Singular They Suggestions

	Percent	True	False
Gender			
Female		43.57%	56.43%
Male		38.82	61.18
Age			
22-32		30	70
33-43		54.13	45.87
44-54		26	74
55-55+		45.68	54
Education			
Bachelor		54.93	45.09
Master		38.38	61.62
Doctorate		40.46	59.54
Subject			
Humanities		34.21	65.79
Non-Humanities		52.50	47.50
Level			
College		31.90	68.10
High School		60	40

It appeared there may be a relation between the distance from the antecedent to the *singular they* as to whether it was accepted or not: The closer the antecedent to the *singular they* the lower chance of it being accepted. This theory, however, did not hold true. In some of the accepted *singular they* sentences the antecedent and the *singular they* were actually closer than they were in sentences that were not accepted. Sentence #4 and #5 were two of these.

Classification all four groups had correct grammar suggestions above 80%: age 22-32 (96.15%), age 33-43 (85.14%), age 44-54

In sentence #4 there were only four words separating the antecedent from the *singular they*. In sentence #5 there were only three words between the antecedent and the *singular they*; and if you look at the s marker on the verb that number is reduced to two.

Two of the sentences that were not accepted make an interesting comparison. Sentence #6 had twelve words between the antecedent and the *singular they* and was still not accepted. Sentence #10 had five words and a comma (making the antecedent in one clause and the *singular they* in yet another clause) dividing the antecedent and the pronoun and still was not accepted. These two sentences had greater distances separating the antecedent and the pronoun and yet they were not accepted. None of the sentences with only one word between the *singular they* and the antecedent, however, were accepted.

It appears that a reason other than proximity is responsible for *singular they* to be accepted. A follow up interview with the participants of the survey would provide further insight into the possible reasons behind why some sentences with *singular they* were accepted and others were not. Until such time, it is truly difficult to speculate about the reasons behind a person's or group's choice; however, a speculative explanation is provided.

In the gender classification, the female group had higher percentages of correct grammar suggestions and acceptance of *singular they* than did the male group. This reflects the fact that females generally feel excluded by the use of the generic *he* and, in hand, would accept *singular they* more often.

In the age classification all four groups had correct grammar suggestions above 80%: age 22-32 (96.15%), age 33-43 (85.14%), age 44-54

(92.06%), age 55-55+ (90.32%). Of these four groups, two had acceptance rates of *singular they* above 40%: age 33-43 (54.13%) and age 55-55+ (45.68%).

Additionally, the age group 33-43 had the largest population (11) of all of the groups in the age classification of the survey, thus having a better chance of representing society as a whole.

In the education classification all three groups had correct grammar suggestions above 80%: bachelor 82.89%, master 86.15%, doctorate 94.51%. Of these groups, two had acceptance rates of *singular they* above 40%: bachelor 54.93% and doctorate 40.46% with the doctorate group having the largest population (14) in the education classification.

In the subject classification, the humanities group had the highest percentage of correctness. This is to be expected as their jobs deal with language more often. However, the humanities group still had a 34.21% acceptance of *singular they*. The non-humanities group, which may represent society better because a broader range of disciplines included in the group, had correct grammar suggestions of 82.28% and had an acceptance rate of *singular they* of 52.50%. The fact that the non-humanities group works less with language and represents a broader range of people could explain why they accepted the use of the *singular they* at a higher rate.

In the last classification, the college professors had 15% more correct grammar suggestions than the high school teachers. Additionally, high school teachers had an acceptance rate for *singular they* 28% higher than college professors and the highest overall acceptance rate of 60%. The reason for the increased rate of grammar errors and an acceptance *singular they* may be that there is a lower level of education or because the returned surveys

from the high school group were from fewer teachers in the humanities. This category may be the most significant because more people attend and graduate from high school than do from college. As was written earlier, less educators are the purveyors of norms. Between college professors and high school teachers, high school teachers will purvey more norms as more students pass through their classrooms than pass through those of professors.

In summary, all of the groups had high rates of correct grammar suggestions with the highest rate from the age group 22-32 (96.15%) and the lowest rate from the high school group (78.26%). As for the acceptance of *singular they*, every classification had at least one group with an acceptance rate above 40%. The highest acceptance rate was from the high school group (60%) and the lowest acceptance rate from the age group 44-54 (26%). Overall, the female group accepted *singular they* more often than did the male group. The age group 33-43 accepted it more than the age group 55-55+, which accepted it more than the age group 22-32, and was followed by the age group 44-54. It appears that the age group 44-54 is most influenced by prescriptive grammar concerning this issue. The bachelor group accepted it more than the doctorate group which was followed by the master group. One could speculate that the people with the least amount of education are less aware of or less concerned about the issue. In order to explain why people with doctorates were more accepting of *singular they* than those with a master's degree, one might speculate that more education and experience in the academic community makes them more aware of weaknesses in prescriptivism and more open to language variation. The non-humanities group accepted it more than the humanities group. Perhaps again the

humanities people, dealing more with language, would be more aware of prescriptive rules. The high school group accepted it more than the college group. Here one can again speculate that people with less education are less aware of or less concerned about the issue. Finally, the overall acceptance of *singular they* was 40.97%.

CONCLUSION

English is a vibrant, dynamic, living language that has gone through many changes and, without a doubt, will continue to change. This is the nature of language: grow, adapt, and be creative in all manners or become ill-suited, fall into disuse, and finally perish. This is what has happened to many languages over time. The Latin used by the common people, for example, was used, changed, and adapted until it became Italian, Spanish, French and other languages, while the diplomatic and religious Latin did not adapt, fell into disuse, and perished.

English is not in any danger of perishing; in fact it is one of the most adaptive languages, noted partially by its world prominence. It is important to notice the changes that are occurring in the language and be aware of some of the reasons for the changes. Just as society and its technology change, so does a language.

This study analyzed one item in the English language: the acceptability of the use of *they* with a singular antecedent, or in other words the use of *singular they* and its acceptability among educators and by extension society as a whole. Many grammar books, instructors, and even governments have tried to purge the English language of *singular they*. Their attempts have

only impeded the natural development of a singular third-person gender-neutral pronoun in English. One can only wonder what would have happened to *they* and *you*, not to mention all of the other changes in the language, if they had met the same fate.

Chapter V

It is well known that the gender *he* is no longer an acceptable option in writing, and many feel that *he/she* combination is a cumbersome and

CONCLUSION

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This study analyzed one item in the English language: the acceptability of the use of *they* with a singular antecedent, or in other words the use of singular *they* and its acceptability among educators and by extension society as a whole. Many grammar books, instructors, and even governments have tried to purge the English language of singular *they*. Their attempts have all failed. Such a high rate of acceptance had not been expected. A 30%

only impeded the natural development of a singular third person gender-neutral pronoun in English. One can only wonder what would have happened to *thou* and *you*, not to mention all of the other changes in the language, if they had met the same resistance.

It is well known that the generic *he* is no longer an acceptable option in writing, and many feel the *he/she* combination is a cumbersome and awkward alternative. In speech it is also very uncomfortable to be continuously using *he or she*, and it disrupts the natural flow and pattern of the language while at the same time placing extra emphasis on the pronouns. This is why the singular *they*, or some form of it, so regularly shows up in speech.

From the survey, all of the groups had high rates of correct grammar suggestions with the highest rate from the age group 22-32 (96.15%) and the lowest rate from the high school group (78.26%). As for the acceptance of singular *they*, every classification had at least one group with an acceptance rate above 40%. The highest acceptance rate was from the high school group (60%) and the lowest acceptance rate from the age group 44-54 (26%). Finally, the overall acceptance of singular *they* was 40.97%.

The results of the study are encouraging to those of us who see singular *they* as a perfectly acceptable element of the English language. We may feel as if we are on the cutting edge of a linguistic sabre that has long been held in its sheath. The study shows an acceptance of singular *they* by the plain fact that instructors did not make suggestions for its improvement in the sentences in which it was used. In fact, it was accepted in over 40% of all occurrences. Such a high rate of acceptance had not been expected. A 20%

acceptance rate had been hoped for; however, even if there had been an acceptance rate of only 10% it would have been enough to take note. This large rate of usage demonstrates the broad and far ranging acceptance of *singular they*.

It is wise for language instructors to call attention to the use of *singular they* to their students. Students should be made aware of the presence of *singular they*, that it has not been entirely accepted as standard just yet, and that some people will look negatively at its use. Lastly, students should be aware of at least the rudimentary reasons for language change and how and why *singular they* has developed.

If this study were to be duplicated or a similar study done in the future it would be interesting to see if the same results occur or what differences there may be. If a follow up study were done, here are a few suggestions to improve it. First of all, time is very important. It is suggested that one have the surveys distributed well in advance of any deadline. This will allow for reminders to fill out the survey to be mailed, and if necessary to mail additional surveys for a greater response rate. This will also allow for more time at the end of the study for compiling the data, the treatment of any unanticipated problems, and needed last minute details.

If you had a larger population you could use a more sophisticated form of statistical analysis than was done here. It would also be wise for a person to become quite familiar with a particular statistics computer program or to enlist the assistance of an individual with such knowledge early on in the study. This will allow more effective data to be collected, and the needed survey to be formed around the capabilities and strength of the computer

program rather than the collection of useless and time consuming data. This efficiency may also allow a person to look at other aspects of *singular they* that have not been thought of or looked at.

One additional item that would improve the study would be a survey of a dictionary's treatment of *singular they* over time. A dictionary is a book about language which reflects common and current usage; however, many people take what a dictionary says as gospel. A survey of a dictionary from the same publisher over a period of a couple of hundred years would demonstrate the changing attitudes towards *singular they*, and additionally would be very interesting and give more credence to the study.

In closing, "language lives only on the lips of living people and must change as the needs of people in expressing themselves change" (Baugh and Cable 341).

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APPENDICIES

Meyers, Miriam Watkins. "Adult Writers' Generic Pronoun Choices."
Ninth Annual Conference of the Organization for the Study of
Communication, Language and Gender. Arlington, 18 October 1986.

I. APPROACHES TO GENERIC PRONOUNS FROM MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS

The manager needs to "in control" at all times. He/she acts as if they
are always right and everyone else is wrong.

If somebody is really stuck and he or she is arguing with you, ...by
making the person laugh, you've broken the pattern of argument and
forced him or her to make changes in what they say and how they say
it.

APPENDIX A

If a person should have known better, then you must ask yourself "Did
they make the mistake deliberately or because they lacked confidence?"

MIXED PRONOMINAL USAGE (The Minute Manager)

For example, if a person is in columns in Ms's Star and Tobac

If anyone doubts the truth of this, they should...

Christopher Evans, The Micro Millennium

When you love someone you do not love them all the time.

Ann Morrow Lindbergh, Gift from the Sea

St. Olaf has adopted the principle that computing opportunities will be
provided to every student in a manner that is relevant for their
particular academic interest.

William L. Carlson, in Technological

Horizons in Education

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1. APPROACHES TO GENERIC PRONOUNS FROM MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS

The manager needs to "in control" at all times. He/she acts as if they are always right and everyone else is wrong.

If somebody is really stuck and he or she is arguing with you, ...by making the person laugh, you've broken the pattern of argument and forced him or her to make changes in what they say and how they say it.

If a person should have known better, then you must ask yourself "Did they make the mistake deliberately or because they lacked confidence?"

Kenneth Blanchard (One-minute Manager)

For example, if a teacher ... in columns in Mpls. Star and Tribune, the teacher can...

If anyone doubts the truth of this, they should....

Christopher Evans, The Micro Millennium

When you love someone you do not love them all the time....

that drug abuse is rampant Anne Morrow Lindbergh, Gift from the Sea
board with so much as a roach clip in their pocket

St. Olaf has adopted the principle that computing opportunities will be provided to every student in a manner that is relevant for their particular academic interest.

William L. Carlson, in Technological Horizons in Education

2. EXAMPLES OF USE OF PRONOUNS IN SPEECH

(including quotations of speech in print)

Everyone has their own....

Frederick Von Stade, on National Public Radio

No one will be able to deduct any (union) dues on their 1987 taxes. that they can. If they hear the Letter to Metro State faculty from its president, an accomplished writer with a Ph. D. in American Studies, with considerable work in English language and literature.

If a person uses part of their capital to make more donations than usual, the contributions may exceed 50 percent of their adjusted gross income.

business column in the Christian Science Monitor

"When you talk about attitude, you're attacking the person -- then they ...no one simply discards their favorite makeup colors....

Vogue fashion article, 1979

One person in my Penn State audience said they would spend time....

One party may have come Robert Rodale, in a "With the Editor" column, Prevention, 1986

Trainees can select any combination of text instruction, video, and/or computer-based exercises. He or she controls the pace....

For example, if a teacher is using an electronics principles book..., the teacher can....

As long as the individual from separate articles in Mc-Graw Hill publication Professional Trainer

CBS...had expressed a lot of self-righteous indignation over allegations that drug abuse is rampant in Hollywood and threatened to fire anyone bound with so much as a roach clip in their pocket.

No longer will people in Nick Coleman, television critic, in a Mpls. Star and Tribune column

millionaires. Everyone Senator Bill Bradley, quoted in article in Mpls. Star and Tribune

2. EXAMPLES OF USE OF SINGULAR THEY IN SPEECH

When that (including quotations of speech in print) their job.

Everyone has their own.... Psychologist Kenneth B. Clark, quoted in The Chronicle of Higher Education

Frederick Von Stade, on National Public Radio

If a person stops smoking, their risk of cancer increases.... Newscaster on Minnesota Public Radio

A physician in success-driven. He or she wants to do the very best that they can. If they hear their colleagues are on time, it sticks in their craw that they're not seeing patients on time....Our research shows that, in order for a patient to be satisfied, the doctor will spend as much time with the patient as the patient spent cooling his heels in the waiting room. If I wait half an hour, I've built up in my mind expectations about what this visit is going to be about. He's not going to get me out of his office in x minutes. Forget it.

Greg Korneluk, medical business consultant
quoted in business column in Mpls. Star and Tribune

"When you talk about attitude, you're attacking the person -- then they get defensive," Harvey explains.

expert quoted in article in Mc-Graw Hill's
Professional Trainer

One party may have community support of their view their view....

Sally McConnell-Ginet, in an address in
Minneapolis, 1986

In a job like mine, you're part of the public trust. If anyone writes you, they deserve an answer.

Jessica Savitch, quoted in Vogue, 1979

As long as the individual is conscious of their pet's health, and keep their pet in good health, they have very little to worry about....

Pierre Bland, veterinarian and
epidemiologist, quoted in article in Mpls. Star and Tribune

No longer will people in poverty be paying more taxes than millionaires. Everyone is going to have to pay their fair share.

Senator Bill Bradley, quoted in article in
Mpls. Star and Tribune

When that doesn't happen, someone is not doing their job.

Psychologist Kenneth B. Clark, quoted in The Chronicle of Higher Education

If a person stops smoking, their risk of cancer increases....

Newscaster on Minnesota Public Radio

I don't think there is anybody in the room...who would care to consider themselves an authority on....

Harold Hodgkinson, senior fellow at the American Council on Education, quoted in The Chronicle of Higher Education

If I had a secretary, he or she would just be sitting around waiting for me to tell them to do something, and I wouldn't know what to tell them.

Walter Matthau, actor, quoted in article in Mpls. Star and Tribune.

I do not see what good it does the Navy to have a student become an expert football player. Once they are on a ship, who knows or cares?

Admiral Hyman G. Rickover, quoted in Mpls. Star and Tribune article

They see others in their situation and say "Oh, my God, this person thinks they're an impostor?"

Gail Ross, psychologist, quoted in article in Mpls. Star and Tribune

If a person on welfare loses his or her benefits, their....

Head of British Labor Party Neal Kinnoch, on National Public Radio

Given the fact that a singer..., it's a wonder they....

Commentator during intermission of "Pavarotti Plus," National Public Radio broadcast "Live from Lincoln Center"

MM:mm

10/16/86

Meyers, Miriam Watkins. "Adult Writers' Generic Pronoun Choices."
Ninth Annual Conference of the Organization for the Study of
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ILLUSTRATIVE APPROACHES TO THE THIRD PERSON OF UNSPECIFIED SEX FROM THE (UNEDITED) WRITING OF ADULT UPPER-DIVISION COLLEGE STUDENTS

1. My idea of an educated person contains these elements: 1.) a self-initiating lifelong learner. This is a person who has learned the skills to educate himself in unknown areas. He has gone through the learning process many times. This educated person is prepared to face any challenge that he encounters. (he, etc.)
2. An educated person **APPENDIX B** responsibility for his/her own learning. ...Knowing one's own strengths and weaknesses is a great benefit. For he/she will be thinking for themselves, and never let them **GENDER NEUTRALITY IN STUDENT WRITING** be trying to achieve beyond the acceptable limits of their capacity. (Inconsistent mixture)
3. To me an educated person has the willingness to learn new and innovative things while also learning about things of the past. One who has a curiosity and open mind....has the skills needed to further and develop one's individual potential to the utmost. (one, one's)
4. In my opinion, an educated person is one who is well-rounded....The educated person does not overlook his/her chosen profession....An educated person must consider not only formal education but also the concepts of permanent learning throughout his/her lifetime.... (he/she)
5. I view an educated person as one who is trained in a specific area...and has the urge to learn about different areas they are not familiar with. They also have the ability to....(singular they)

6. My response to the question...is most influenced by a response I recently received in a consultation with (x, who) said that one of the most exciting thing about her job was... I believe that one of the most important facets of the educated persons attitude is that there

Meyers, Miriam Watkins. "Adult Writers' Generic Pronoun Choices."

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8. Because an educated person continues to learn throughout a lifetime, it is my intention... By obtaining a degree...my education

ILLUSTRATIVE APPROACHES TO THE THIRD PERSON OF UNSPECIFIED SEX FROM THE (UNEDITED) WRITING OF ADULT UPPER-DIVISION COLLEGE STUDENTS

9. To be an educated person is to possess both the necessary skills for a

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2. An educated person is one who takes responsibility for his/her own learning. ...Knowing ones own strengths and weaknesses is a great benefit. For, he/she will be thinking for themselves, and never letting their limits be limiting to them. They will always be trying to achieve beyond the acceptable limits of their capacity. (Inconsistent mixture)
3. To me an educated person has the willingness to learn new and innovative things while also learning about things of the past. One who has a curiosity and open mind.....has the skills needed to further and develop one's individual potential to the utmost. (one, one's)
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6. My response to the question...is most influenced by a response I recently received in a consultation with (x, who) said that one of the most exciting thing about her job was.... I believe that one of the most important facets of the educated persons attitude is that there is a sincere desire.... (using a real life example and sentence transformation)
8. Because an educated person continues to learn throughout a lifetime, it is my intention.... By obtaining a degree...my education will be more complete, thereby allowing me.... (first person singular approach)
9. To be an educated person is to possess both the necessary skills for a vocation of one's choice and to be able to.... An educated person can think for herself.... Education should prepare a person to.... In fact, ...how well one handles life and our changing world is a direct reflection of how well one has learned to apply and use the knowledge one has been exposed to. (consistent singular with she)
10. An educated person is a person who is aware of who she is and what her place in the world is. She is comfortable with herself and unafraid to present that self to others around her. She feels that she has a purpose in her life, and she understands the environment in which she is living. (she)

Kickers Inc. Advertisement poster.

Kickers Inc. teaches techniques that are very useful and very effective for an individual to protect themselves in today's society against crime on the streets, or elsewhere.

Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid. Financial Aid Award Information 1993-94. St. Cloud: St. Cloud State University, 1993.

The loan guarantee agency may adjust this amount if they determine that your eligibility is different based on previous loans. (6)

Each school's policy must be in compliance with federal guidelines, but each school defines their own policy within those guidelines. (8)

APPENDIX C

St. Cloud State University. Singular They Used in Real Life. St. Cloud: St. Cloud State University, 1993.

Participants will be given an opportunity to meet an author and/or children's book illustrator as they discuss their works for children in grades K-8. (12)

Anyone under 21 years consuming or possessing alcoholic beverages with intent to consume, unless the person is in a parent or guardian's home and drinks with their permission. (16)

No one will be allowed to process an add before their earliest scheduled registration time. (3)

Office of Graduate Studies. Graduate Student Handbook 1993-1994. St. Cloud: St. Cloud State University, 1993.

Petitions must be signed by the student and their academic advisor before the graduate office will act upon them. (13)

The next item comes from a book written by James P. Spradley from Macalester College named Participant Observation.

Kickers Inc. Advertisement poster. Participant Observation. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1980.)

Kickers Inc. teaches techniques that are very useful and very effective for **an individual** to protect **themselves** in today's society against crime on the streets, or elsewhere.

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The loan guarantee agency may adjust this amount if they determine that your eligibility is different based on previous loans. (6)

Tuckman, Bruce W. Conducting Educational Research. 4th ed. Orlando:

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St. Cloud State University. Summer Session. St. Cloud: St. Cloud State University, 1994.

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Office of Graduate Studies. Graduate Student Handbook 1993-1994. St. Cloud: St. Cloud State University, 1993.

Petitions must be signed by **the student** and **their** academic advisor before the graduate office will act upon them. (13)

Well, if the mistletoe irritates someone, tell them to take it down.

The next item comes from a book written by James P. Spradley from Macalester College named Participant Observation.

(Spradley, James P. Participant Observation. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1980.)

If I have to wait for **someone** else to finish using the machine, I don't watch what **they** are doing *in order to* understand more fully **their** actions. I know what **they** are doing; I may look at the way **they** have dressed, or try to remember **their** name if I have heard it before. (54)

You will not try to pay attention to how quickly **each person** moves, how **they** stand, how **they** handle their belongings,... (55)

Tuckman, Bruce W. Conducting Educational Research. 4th ed. Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994.

Request for cooperation. The letter constitutes an appeal from you for **the respondent's** help. If there are special reasons why **they** should help (for example, the importance of the study for their profession) be sure to mention them. (242-3)

A quote from Scott Friedhoff, dean of undergraduate admissions at Hamline University.

(Learner, Maura. "As battle for students heats up, colleges cite their graduation rates." Star Tribune 3 April 1994: 10 A.)

We tell **a student** that if **they** start school here and take and pass eight courses a year and meet with an advisor on a regular basis, that **they** will graduate in four years." said Friedhoff, of Hamline. "If **they** don't and if it's our fault, the fifth year's tuition is free.

The last item is a quote of Roland Dille, former president of Moorhead State University with a Ph. D. in English Literature.

(Meier, Peg. "Prez Dille's open door is closing." Star Tribune 5 June 1994: 10 E.)

Well, if the mistletoe irritates **someone**, tell **them** to take it down.

Minnesota Department of Human Services. A New Financial Worker's Guide to the CAF II. 15 January, 1993.

How does a client authorize someone to act on their behalf? (9)

If the client changes this request during the interview, have them initial and date their change. (12)

Depending on the program of coverage, a spouse of an applicant will either be included in the assistance unit or have their income deemed available to the assistance unit. (13)

If the applicant has checked "no" to all the questions on pages 2 and 3 for any person, they do not have to answer anymore questions for that person. (17)

APPENDIX D

If the client states that someone is not a citizen, their status must be verified. (18)

SINGULAR THEY IN GOVERNMENT MANUALS

Your agency may use it to assist their work and training providers for the AFDC, GA/WR and Food Stamp programs. (19)

Does each person currently live in Minnesota and intend to make Minnesota their home? (20)

If the client maintains a home in another state, note purpose of their presence in Minnesota. (21)

Note the reason the person is out of the home, how long they have been gone, and the date of expected return. (22)

If the client answers "yes" they must list the reason. (24)

A person does NOT have to be on Public Assistance to use their services. (25)

This means that the client can provide verification to support their claim of a lower value than the one you assigned to the asset...If they can provide verification of this...you will use the lower value. (32)

Minnesota Department of Human Services. A New Financial Worker's Guide to the CAF II. 15 January, 1993.

How does a **client** authorize someone to act on **their** behalf? (9)

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Note the reason **the person** is out of the home, how long **they** have been gone, and the date of expected return. (22)

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A person does NOT have to be on **Public Assistance** to use **their** services. (25)

This means that **the client** can provide verification to support **their** claim of a lower value than the one you assigned to the asset....If **they** can provide verification of this...you will use the lower value. (32)

Stearns County. Claims and Collections Work Group Procedures. 5 August, 1994.

And we will be dissolving **this work group** since **their** work on this issue is done. (1)

Unit Supervisor gives **the original financial worker** the information and **they** proceed with....If there is no original worker in the financial units, **the Unit Supervisor** or **their designee** deals with the claim. (2)

Stearns County. Procedures Manual. 1 September, 1994.

Each worker does intake on their own cases even if **they** only have a service case on the client. (9)

When a child is placed in **an adoptive home** and a subsidy has been approved the placing county must send out an application packet. **They** must be instructed to complete the application for the child and return it to the county of residence. (15)

If a worker has left the agency or unit and something comes up on a closed case that cannot be resolved by **the current worker**, refer it to **their** Supervisor. (16)

When workers switch worker numbers, **the worker** should take care of problems on a case that **they** closed under **their** old worker number. (16)

E-mail: mae123@tiger.stcloud.mn.us.edu

March 20, 1995

Dear potential participant,

This survey is an essential part of a study for a thesis in a Master of Arts program in Teaching English as a Second Language at St. Cloud State University. The survey, which should take less than 15 minutes to complete, is part of a linguistic study of current usage in English, and I would like to ask for your participation in my efforts.

This survey is being distributed to teachers at Westview High School in Braham and professors at St. Cloud State University with the permission of both institutions. The names of the individuals selected for the survey have been selected at random and this is by no means a test that will have any influence on participants' employment situation. No individuals will be identified in the results of the study as prepared for the thesis or any other possible publication. It is preferred that participants remain anonymous.

Results of the study will be made available to participants who desire them by way of the enclosed postcard. The postcard should be filled out and returned separately from the survey to insure no participant can be matched to any survey.

APPENDIX E

SURVEY MATERIALS

To complete the survey, please fill out the demographics in Part A, and read the provided sentences in Part B as if they were sentences appearing in a paper from a student in your class for appropriate language and, if needed, provide suggestions for improvement.

The advisor for this study and master's degree is Sjoellen Rundquist, Ph. D., who is a professor of linguistics at St. Cloud State University.

If you have any questions or concerns I may be reached at my office, Riverview 7, at St. Cloud State University. My phone number there is 255-3041 and I am normally in my office from 8:30 a.m. to 9:50 a.m. and 11:10 a.m. to 12:50 p.m. You may also reach me at my apartment during the evenings, 252-7485. For participants in Braham, I am normally in Braham on Sunday afternoons and may be reached at 396-3217.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your participation in my study.

Sincerely,

Philip R. Anderson

Your participation is greatly needed. Please return the survey by March 31, 1995.

E-mail: mae123@tigger.stcloud.msus.edu

March 20, 1995

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This survey is an essential part of a study for a thesis in a Master of Arts program in Teaching English as a Second Language at St. Cloud State University. The survey, which should take less than 15 minutes to complete, is part of a linguistic study of current usage in English, and I would like to ask for your participation in my efforts.

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To complete the survey, please fill out the demographics in Part A, and read the provided sentences in Part B as if they were sentences appearing in a paper from a student in your class for appropriate language and, if needed, provide suggestions for improvement.

The advisor for this study and master's degree is Suellen Rundquist, Ph. D., who is a professor of linguistics at St. Cloud State University.

If you have any questions or concerns I may be reached at my office, Riverview 7, at St. Cloud State University. My phone number there is 255-3041 and I am normally in my office from 8:30 a.m. to 9:50 a.m. and 11:10 a.m. to 12:50 p.m. You may also reach me at my apartment during the evenings, 252-7485. For participants in Braham, I am normally in Braham on Sunday afternoons and may be reached at 396-3217.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your participation in my study.

Sincerely,

Philip R. Anderson

Your participation is greatly needed. Please return the survey by March 31, 1995.

Part B

SURVEY FOR PHILIP R. ANDERSON

Please read the following as if they were sentences appearing in a paper from a student in your class. (Please return by March 31, 1995) Provide suggestions for improvement.

Part A

1) Last week the United States borrowed a missile defense unit to Kuwait for

Please circle the response that applies to you.

1) What is your level of education?

- A) Bachelor's degree B) Some graduate courses C) Master's degree
D) Doctorate

2) How many years have you taught?

- A) 0-2 years B) 3-5 years C) 5-10 years D) 10+ years

3) At what level are the courses you teach?

High school

- A) Grade 9 B) Grade 10 C) Grade 11 D) Grade 12

College level

- A) Freshman & Sophomores B) All undergraduate levels
C) Undergraduate & Graduate D) Graduate

4) What subject do you teach?

- A) Humanities (Languages, Education, Art, Psychology, Political Science...)
B) Business (Management, Accounting, Travel/Tourism, Office Mgmt...)
C) Science (Chemistry, Physics, Biology....)
D) Industrial Studies (Engineering, Computers, Carpentry, Electronics..)

In which age group are you?

- A) 22 - 32 years of age B) 33 - 43 C) 44 - 54 D) 55 or above

What is your gender?

- A) Female B) Male

Part B

Please read the following as if they were sentences appearing in a paper from a student in your class for appropriate language and, if needed, provide suggestions for improvement.

1) Last week the United States borrowed a missile defense unit to Kuwait for a training mission.

2) No one will be allowed to add a class before their earliest scheduled registration time.

3) The senator wrote, It became very clear to me in the last session that you folks have the greatest impact on my colleagues and I.

4) There is no legal requirement that anyone give us any information or that they use our financial aid service.

5) Because of constant criticism by the news media, the president's chances for reelection have lessened considerably in the last year.

6) Petitions must be signed by the student and their academic advisor before the graduate office will act upon them.

7) How well the new comedy series does in the ratings depends almost entirely on its competition.

8) If the mistletoe is an irritant to someone, have them remove it.

9) The doctor told me to lay down on the couch and tell her all about what was on my mind.

19) Each worker does intake on their own cases even if they only have a

10) Each school's smoking policy must be in compliance with federal guidelines, but each school defines their own policy within those guidelines.

20) In the office memorandum the boss said, "Just give the inventory report

11) Last month the Nazi had been brought to trial for crimes which were supposed to have been committed in 1945.

21) The public is not so angry about corruption in government than it is

12) No one will be able to deduct any union dues on their 1994 taxes.

13) "The coffee still taste as bitter as it did before the restaurant switched to a costlier brand," wrote the taste editor.

14) The doctor insists that the Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, stay home.

22) Being as how he can no longer pretend innocence, Sutton has confessed to taking part in the burglary.

15) If the client answers "yes" to the inquiry, they must list the reason.

16) Whose to blame -- the worker who has acted without permission or the boss whose staff has gotten out of hand?

17) This work group will be dissolving since their work on this issue is done.

18) If the prosecutor had stayed ten minutes longer, he would of learned exactly what he wanted to know.

19) Each worker does intake on their own cases even if they only have a service case on the client.

20) In the office memorandum the boss said, "Just give the inventory report to John or I."

21) The public is not so angry about corruption in government than it is disgusted with inflation.

22) Anyone interested in making a lateral transfer within this job classification must indicate their interest within 7 days of the date of the job posting.

23) Being as how he can no longer pretend innocence, Sutton has confessed to taking part in the burglary.

Philip R. Anderson
Dept of English
SCSU
720 4th Ave. South
St. Cloud, MN
56301-4498

Please print your
address if you wish
to receive the
results of the study.